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Gathering ballet's best

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CS combat goes live

Meet the only real world *Counter-Strike* team made up entirely of ex-soldiers.



An industry drunk on status

In the West, red wine started as an essential part of daily meals before becoming a part of culture. In China, the order is reversed: agents have to make wine fashionable before consumers will appreciate its function. It's no surprise that quality can get lost in the mix.

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Draft law might make home visits mandatory

By Han Manman

Adult children may be required to visit their elderly parents regularly, according to a draft amendment to relevant laws submitted this week to the State Council, *Legal Daily* reported Wednesday.

Delinquent children could be liable for damages to their parents in court.

Though traditional Chinese parents believe children who have come of age have the duty to support and assist their parents, half of the elderly parents live alone without children.

Some cannot afford essential care.

The draft amendment has a chapter called "spiritual comfort," which prohibits family members from isolating or neglecting their parents.

Wu Ming, an official from the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), said though the new draft law did not regulate how often adult children must visit their parents, they could be sued in court if their parents were unsatisfied.

Wu said the courts used to dismiss such suits, but the new law would force them to hear the case.

Zhang Fangju, a 67-year-old retired teacher, said though she has no plans to sue her son, she appreciates that the law gives elders some power to battle their loneliness.

"It is ironic for a nation to legislate basic morals," Zhang said. "I think this amendment is more about promoting good moral values than punishment."

Zhang has a comparatively easy life in Beijing. However, she is not happy. Her husband died five years ago, and her only son – who works in Guangzhou – visits only once every two to three years.

"I have a good life and a stable income, but I feel lonely. If one day



Half of the elderly parents in China live alone without children.

CFP Photo

I fall ill, I have no idea who would take care of me," Zhang said.

Zhang's concerns are well founded. Recently a series of incidents in Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi Province, in which old people died unnoticed in their homes, highlighted the plight of the elderly.

In October, an old man in Fuzhou, Fujian Province, lay undiscovered in his home for a week before neighbors alerted authorities of an overpowering stench.

Statistics from the MCA showed that there were 167 mil-

lion people older than 60 at the end of 2009, accounting for 12.5 percent of the population. That proportion exceeds the figure of 10 percent recommended by the United Nations.

The present population structure is a heavy burden for young workers. In the early 1990s, 10 young Chinese workers supported one elderly person. These days, every young couple has to support four parents and one child.

Wu said the country has put much effort into establishing and

improving the social welfare system. He said the new draft also encourages local governments to extend old social security payments to those older than 80 and provide them with free medical care.

As for home-based care, social institutions, volunteers and community workers are being encouraged to offer door-to-door services.

The current Law of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly was adopted on August 29, 1996, and went into effect October 1, 1996.

Forensic institute opens high-tech service to individuals

By Chu Meng

The Fada Institute of Forensic Medicine and Science, the country's first forensic science organization authorized by the Ministry of Justice to receive judicial identification applications from individuals, opened on January 1.

The independent institute is a non-profit organization under the academic support and supervision of China University of Political Science and Law, the top judicial university in China.

The Beijing-based institute will process forensic cases filed by judicial organs and arbitration agencies, as well as handle judicial identification requests by law firms, insurance companies, corporations and individuals.

Categorized services are pro-

vided by its 11 sections such as the Forensic Clinic Department for labor injury evaluation, the Forensic Accounting Department for financial records tampering and the Trace Evidence Analysis Department for criminal espionage.

"We currently only accept lawsuit-oriented applications from individuals. Fees range from hundreds to tens of thousands of yuan depending on the task and its difficulty," Chang Lin, director of Fada, said.

Applicants are responsible for collecting evidence-bearing materials.

"People should be aware that any results and conclusions from forensic identification only serve as references for the court. Foren-

sic technicians can testify in court if necessary, but the court makes the final decision based on comprehensive evidence," Chang said.

Its service most requested by private citizens is paternity testing. Requests to identify loan receipts, contracts in outstanding disputes, wills of inheritance and medical liabilities are also common.

Huo Xiandan, an official from the Forensic Identification Bureau under the Ministry of Justice, said the last decade of economic boom has created an incredible demand for forensic sciences and techniques.

For the same reason, Chinese citizens' demands for independent forensic identification have also grown tremendously.

The rise of sophisticated law-

suits has also created a need for forensic identification since many high-tech cases are beyond the scope of traditional evidence collection and testimony.

"More and more, excellently equipped, professional forensic institutes are needed across the country in the future," Huo said at Fada's opening ceremony.

Among the more than 1,000 organizations that provide identification services for court use, only 10 including Fada are authorized by the ministry.

"During the next Five-year Plan, we will open more judicial services and resources to private citizens and tighten our supervision of current identification organizations to foster a more just, fair and open environment," Huo said.

Court frames process to bust illegal fundraisers

By Zhao Hongyi

Fundraisers that do not follow national laws on financial regulation and management may be interpreted and prosecuted for illegal fundraising, according to an interpretation issued by the Supreme People's Court on Tuesday.

The interpretation notes that the unauthorized issuing of stocks and corporate bonds to more than 200 people may also be prosecuted as criminal.

Private fundraising attempts are growing increasingly common. Between June 2005 and 2010, there have been more than 10,000 cases of illegal fundraising that drew in more than 100 billion yuan.

There are expected to be another 2,000 cases this year involving capital equivalent to 20 billion yuan.

The judicial interpretation applies to all cases beginning Tuesday.

Most incidences of illegal fundraising have occurred in the agriculture, property, mineral, manufacturing, health and education markets, contacts at National Public Security said.

Almost 80 percent of the funds raised illegally are used by criminals for private consumption: less than 20 percent of that is traceable.

Since 2008, Chinese police have uncovered nearly 5,000 cases of illegal fundraising, arrested 5,400 suspects and retrieved 12.2 billion yuan.

"The crimes seriously hurt the public and threaten our social stability," the ministry said in its report.

Individuals collecting more than 100,000 yuan and organizations collecting more than half a million yuan will be defined as "serious offenders."

The interpretation sets the prosecution baseline as individual fundraising cases involving 200,000 yuan and organizational ones involving 1 million yuan, or individual fundraising cases involving more than 30 contributors or organizational ones with more than 150.

Individuals may be held liable for 100,000 yuan in damages – organizations could expect to pay 500,000 yuan.

The interpretations state that fundraising attempts that use the media or text messages to target people at random with the promises of principal and interest will be classified as crimes of illegal deposits.

Those who facilitate illegal fundraising by offering assistance in publicity will be punished as accomplices.

Advertising service firms which are involved in facilitating illegal fundraising will be punished for false advertising.

"The criminals and facilitators involved will be punished as much as possible within the law," the interpretations said.

The interpretation excludes private fundraisers between relatives or within an organization from punishment.

Embassy intervenes to aid Russian wife in divorce

By Chu Meng

A Russian mother of two, who was repeatedly abused by her wealthy Chinese husband, has divorced with the help of the Russian embassy.

She was awarded 300,000 yuan in compensation by the court on Tuesday in Beijing.

Korableva, whose given name is protected in the court record, suffered a ruptured spleen and severe bruises after being attacked during fierce arguments with her husband, Liu Jue, at their multi-million-yuan villa in Shunyi district on May 10, 2010.

Liu, 39, a businessman and former boxer, was charged with assault and ordered by the Beijing Second Intermediate People's Court to pay 300,000 yuan in compensation to his wife.

He was detained shortly after the trial and remains at the Shunyi jail while he awaits sentencing. Liu may face up to five years in prison.

Korableva, 31, has a slim build and fair hair and skin. She said that despite the divorce, she

intends to remain in Beijing with her sons, ages 3 and 9. Originally from a remote and impoverished Russian village, she has been living in Beijing for the last decade.

"I met my ex-husband at a dance club and restaurant in Heilongjiang Province. We fell in love in 1999 when I was 20. I was still a simple girl at that time, wanting to find a rich husband in China. I married him and moved to Beijing in 2000. But I don't think I could adapt to a life back in my old village," she said.

Their marriage was fine until 2007, when Korableva says Liu began developing a temper problem.

"It started with him beating my sons over the head with a scabbard while they were reading their primary school books. He insisted it was his way of educating and wouldn't let me interfere," she said.

Gradually, Liu progressed to beating her using sticks and belts during their arguments – espe-

cially after Korableva said she wanted to return to work.

"I was getting less and less respect in the family. I needed to be able to support myself, my sons and my parents, who are also living in Beijing," she said. "I could easily find a job dancing or teaching language."

"I am filled with regret," Liu, a manager at Hummer Club, told Xinhua News Agency. "I hope to compensate my wife. I can give her the villa, the cars and money. Just for the forgiveness. All of our arguments were caused by some domestic trifles."

Liu Weimin, a family law professor from Peking University, said Korableva is not alone in her plight. Statistics show that domestic violence is a problem in 30 percent of Chinese families. The statistic falls to 20 percent in mixed marriages.

According to data from the municipal bureau of civil affairs, the number of mixed marriages between a Chinese national and foreigner in Beijing has grown steadily since 2000.

"About 1,000 mixed couples tie the knot every year in Beijing. In 2009, the number was 1,269. There were 88 divorces among mixed couples the same year," the law professor said.

Sergei Razov, the Russian ambassador to China, said Chinese police were lazy in their mediation of mixed couples' disputes.

"Domestic violence is ignored or seen as trivial domestic affairs by Chinese police. Korableva had reported to the police several times before filing a criminal case, but no one paid real attention. In Russia, husbands normally receive much more severe punishment," the ambassador said.

In the past decade, mixed marriages between Russian women and Chinese men have been common in the northeast.

Near Shulan, Jilin Province – three hours from Changchun – there is a village full of Russian brides. In Sihe Village, 90 percent of the rural men married foreign women,

mostly Russians.

Liu Weimin said there were three reasons for the popularity of Russian brides. Russia has only 88 men for every 100 women. Moreover, many Russian men are deemed unmarrriageable because of excessive drinking and aggression. Most Russian girls also consider life in China to be economically secure. Moreover, whereas China limits families to one child, Russia is paying its women to have more children.

One website, promoting itself as a matchmaking site for single Russian women, has 436 members eager to find a foreign spouse.

Liu Weimin said he would like to remind the young women that "finding independent economic support is very important for a foreign wife in China, especially those from less developed countries. If they are suffering from regular violence at home, they are better off contacting the embassy instead of the police."



Chinese police officers update their micro-blogs during an online interview in Quanzhou, Fujian Province. IC Photo

A year of Chinese new media in review

New media is growing fast and influencing people's lives in ways few things have before.

Last year, China's new media industry saw explosive development. But with "new" comes uncertainties and challenges. The following are brief reviews on the development of China's new media and outlooks on its future.

Micro-blogging

At a time when netizens have lost interest in lengthy articles and elites seek to stay in the spotlight, micro-blogs make their wishes come true.

Short and convenient, micro-blogs experienced a "big bang" last year, with the number of micro-bloggers at Sina almost doubling in less than six months.

Afterwards, the other three major web portals, including Sohu, QQ.com and 163.com, each set up its own micro-blogging services.

With more government officials and entities registering, China's micro-blogging services are widely expected to play a more important role in connecting the public and the government in 2011.

Search engines

Baidu's dominant position in the search engine market is being challenged by Sohu, Microsoft Bing and Goso.cn, run by the *People's Daily*, the flagship newspaper of the Communist Party of China.

Xinhua is also preparing to launch a search engine together with China Mobile.

Goso and Xinhua both have the advantage in terms of providing content, while Bing has the edge in technology and funding. They are expected to pose threats to Baidu in 2011.

Internet Ghostwriters

"Internet Ghostwriters," or *shuijun*, are people who write message board threads at the behest of public relations agencies. They are often employed to sabotage reputations on the Internet.

China's Tort Liability Law, which took effect in July last year, stipulates that in cases of privacy violations or damaged reputations, the victim has the right to inform the Internet service provider (ISP) to delete harmful postings and that the ISP must face joint liability for damages if it fails to act.

Experts have urged supervision of public relations firms who employ *shuijun* to stop the problem at its source.

Team-buying

Group purchasing websites developed rapidly in 2010 when Wang Xing, founder of Twitter-like "Fanfou.com," started Meituan.com, the mainland's first group purchasing website.

The potentially lucrative business model of online team-buying is spreading, and the number of group purchase websites doubled to 900 in July, according to figures from a Beijing-based Internet analysis firm, Analysis International.

Despite the large number of existing competitors, three of the top four portal websites launched group purchasing services in July.

While group purchases may attract many Chinese netizens, insiders warn that the process is unsupervised and unregulated, and that buyers should exercise caution to protect themselves.

Social Networking

In the latter half of 2010, social net-

working took a downturn with numerous smaller networks shutting down. Even the leading Kaixin001.com had to accept that its number of visitors was plummeting.

Apparently a number of Chinese netizens did not grasp the essence of social networking, but only logged on to play games, like stealing vegetables from their friends' farms.

Also, many users were said to be only interested in other people's private information while being reluctant to share their own.

Networking itself is not the goal. What these websites should do is create their own innovative products that can help netizens achieve more value through networking, media experts said.

Government websites

In 2010, it has become a trend for the government to collect public opinions and allow people to voice their concerns on the Internet.

However, a staggering 78.5 percent of some 450,000 Chinese citizens surveyed were unsatisfied with government websites, according to a 2010 report.

These respondents complained that some government websites were not updated for long periods and netizens' messages were often ignored. Also, many services and pages were not accessible.

People's rights to know, supervise and participate can be protected via the Internet and the credibility of the government can be improved. But in order to fully explore this high-tech shortcut, the country's leaders at all levels have a long way to go.

(Xinhua)

Five years in, country still fails to control tobacco

By Zhang Dongya

When China signed on to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2006, it made a pledge to halt smoking in indoor public places and workplaces by January 9, 2011.

Sunday is the deadline of that forgotten pledge.

The 2010 China Tobacco Control Report, published by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, states that the country still has more than 1 million people who die from smoke-related diseases each year.

Indeed, it seems the country's tobacco controls have backslid: the number of people regularly exposed to second-hand smoke increased by 200 million during the last three years.

"Tobacco control is a global agenda. But for the last five years, China has been hesitant, lingering at the launch stage with no progress to note," says Wu Yiqun, 62, deputy director of Think Tank Research Center for Health Development, a NGO serving public health since 2001.

Slow progress

Chen Jiayu, 32, a lifelong Beijinger, has been smoking for more than 10 years. He averages a pack a day, but can limit himself to 15 or 16 cigarettes on occasion.

He smokes in restaurants, on the road and at home.

"I have never been told not to smoke in a public area, let alone been fined," he says. "The only change has been the addition of non-smoking sections in restaurants. I respect the signs and avoid smoking when I sit in one of those sections."

But restaurants lack partitions, making it easy for smoke to waft throughout the restaurant.

While the capital passed its Regulations to Ban Smoking in Public Places in 1995, the first actual violation of this ban was recorded in May 2008.

The regulations required that smokers who refuse to put out their cigarettes be fined 10 yuan: organizations violating the regulation would be fined between 1,000 and 5,000 yuan.

It was only after a promise to provide the world with a "smoke-free" Olympics that city officials remembered this forgot-



China has a custom of presenting cigarettes and liquor as gifts that makes tobacco control taboo.



The balancing act between politics and public health continues to dog tobacco reform.

CFP Photos



Cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou have regulated smoking, but only during brief international events.

ten regulation. To their credit, many of the capital's smokers chose not to smoke in public during the Olympics.

They have been making up for lost time ever since.

Insiders says the existing anti-smoking law is technically unenforceable because the Administrative Punishment Law enacted in 1996 prohibits sanitation inspectors from issuing tickets to violators.

Failing the Convention

At the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-4) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in Uruguay last November, China was once again the recipient of a Dirty Ashtray Award.

Since it was passed in 2005, the international tobacco treaty has been signed by more than 170 nations: China included.

But unlike the other signatories, China failed to meet the demands of the convention, says Wu Yiqun, the country's current champion of tobacco control.

According to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, China had to take two very basic steps: it had to completely ban smoking indoors and get rid of its smoking sections in restaurants and

indoor public places.

Restaurants were the most critical target because they gather many people, especially young people and women – the key victims of second-hand smoke. Internet cafes, the smokiest places, were another high-profile target.

But even hospitals failed to control tobacco use.

Think Tank Research Center for Health Development made unannounced visits to more than 10 hospitals, during which student volunteers photographed smokers and cigarette butts throughout the hospitals.

The most popular place for smoking was the waiting areas for each doctor. Some people smoked near the windows and threw the cigarette butts out of the building. Students photographed roofs under the windows that were full of cigarette butts. "One roof had more than 100 cigar butts," Wu says.

While these hospitals were designated as "smoke-free," some were found to be selling cigarettes along with medicine.

At Think Tank's urging, several Internet cafes posted signs to ask patrons not to smoke and set the desktop wallpaper on computers to have an

anti-smoking message.

But without enforceable laws or penalties, real progress in stamping out tobacco was elusive.

A great obstacle

Article 11 of the Convention provides that health warnings must cover 30 percent of each cigarette package – ideally half – front and back. It suggests adding pictures to the packs for illiterate smokers.

In the past five years, China has made no effort to meet these requirements.

Canada and Spain use gruesome photos of patients dying of lung cancer, but China keeps only one line of small type reading "Smoking is hazardous to your health."

During the last century, the presentation of cigarettes and liquor as gifts became a standard cultural custom in China. Packages are adorned with images of famous mountains and rivers, and delegations rebuked the Convention saying the required images were "an insult to the public that strikes at the heart of Chinese customs."

"At least we can pass a better law to control tobacco, and then beef up the force and funding used to make sure smokers obey," Wu says.

So far, there is no national-level law to regulate tobacco. While Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hangzhou have passed local regulations, these are enforced to varying degrees.

While Shanghai banned smoking in all public spaces and Guangzhou banned smoking in offices, these measures were like the Olympics-inspired smoking ban: short-lived and event-oriented.

"Local media reported that China would make progress in controlling tobacco by 2015, but they did not say how that would happen or who wants it to happen," Wu says.

"I hope they follow through. To the Chinese government, tobacco control is as much a political issue as a public health one. Any action it takes has to balance long-term interests and immediate benefits," she says.

Heritage for sale

Commercial expansion threatens world's last matriarchy

Where women rule

Two women row a canoe made of driftwood across a lake, their eyes fixed on a destination in the distance. The woman in the foreground bites her bottom lip with determination. There's steeliness in her expression that says she's done this many times before.

In a series of exceptional photographs, Italian photographer Luca Locatelli spent a month documenting the lives of the Mosuo tribe, often described as one of the last matriarchal societies in the world.

Locatelli travelled to Lugu Lake in southwest China, 2,700 meters above sea level, taking two days to reach his destination by road. There, in a valley on the border of the Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, he shadowed a society where women are in charge and where there are no words to express the concepts of "father" or "husband."

Locatelli describes Lugu Lake as "paradise." "The water is clear and clean and the surroundings are peaceful and beautiful – it's perfect," he says.

Known as the "Kingdom of Women" throughout China, 40,000 Mosuo people live in a network of villages around the lake. Women here make most major decisions; they control household finances, have the rightful ownership of land and houses, and full rights to the children born to them.

But Locatelli feels something is changing the world's last matriarchy. As commerce tries to elbow tradition out of the way and younger generations of the Mosuo are tempted by outside influence, a darker, seedier side has emerged in recent years. Tourism is booming, and local government is keen to market and monetize the Mosuo to tourists.

"Arriving in Luoshu was a shock – it was tacky and not how I expected," says Locatelli. "There were a lot of people asking for money." **(The Observer)**

It is probably the last matriarchal tribe in the world. There is no marriage and men and women can change and choose partners as they please. But the arrival of tourism and commercial development has put the Mosuo culture in danger.



In southwestern Yunnan lives one of the most unique ethnic groups in the country – the Mosuo people.

Huang Jinguo/CFP Photo

The third eye

Endangered ethnic minority culture

By Huang Daohen

Will commercial development and tourism spoil the Mosuo culture? Professor Wang Qingren from Minzu University of China said it has been a dilemma ever since the country opened up and set economic growth as its main goal.

Tourism has indeed brought great opportunities for the local economy, but it also has wrought major changes on the everyday life of the Mosuo people, Wang said.

Wang said he has visited Lugu Lake several times and found that while visitors pour in, many young villagers

choose to move out into cities to find employment.

"In cities, these young people will accept new lifestyles and gradually lose interest in inheriting their traditional singing, dancing and clothing," Wang said.

With fewer local voices, their culture is increasingly left open to interpretation by outside writers and the media, which can lead to misunderstandings about Mosuo culture.

Wang said before his first experience with the Mosuo, he assumed that men in a matriarchal culture

would be somewhat sissified. However, Mosuo men are masculine, like cowboys, Wang said.

Local Mosuo men told Wang that they had no problem with women in charge. Men have physical strength, so they do work that requires strength and endurance. Women have mental acuity, so their job is to do skilled labor.

They have to inherit the culture and speak for themselves, Wang said.

Wang said many ethnic minority culture also face the Mosuo dilemma. Many traditions and languages of ethnic minorities in China are now on the

verge of extinction.

Wang suggested local governments establish specific functional zones for tourism to protect the Mosuo culture while developing the tourism industry.

Wang said the special zones would be more like tourism villages that contain all the substantial aspects of Mosuo culture, like cottages, traditional clothing and food. Cultural performances can be shown in this village, and visitors can interact with locals.

The zone can separate locals from tourists and protect traditional culture, Wang said.

About Mosuo culture

A matriarchal world without marriage

The Mosuo tribe is probably the last matriarchy in the world, where women have the power of the house. There is no marriage in the village and people have no concept of lifetime pairings. Children are often raised without knowing who their biological father is.

In Mosuo culture, men and women can change and choose partners as they please. Monogamy is not considered special or even particularly desirable.

Usually, the Mosuo people live in large extended families, with many generations all living together in the same house. Men don't have private bedrooms and they

sleep in communal sleeping rooms; only the women have the luxury of a private bedroom. Thus, women tend to be the ones in control of relationships.

Traditionally, a Mosuo woman will invite a man to spend the night with her. The man will come to her home at night, sneaking in through her window, spending the night, and then leaving early the next morning before everyone wakes up.

This is the important interesting aspect of the Mosuo culture: it is known as "walking marriages" because men must walk to and from their assigned rendezvous each night.

But walking marriages have caused misperceptions, such as that the Mosuo are promiscuous and change partners all the time. This is not exactly true, as many Mosuo pairings will last for years, even decades.

There is no social stigma if someone does change partners often, but it is more common for each pairing to last for an extended period, and people won't generally have multiple partners while in a relationship.

However, even among couples who are together for decades, they generally will never actually live together, or share

property. The man will continue to live in his family's home, and his responsibilities are to that family; while the woman will continue to live in her home, and be responsible to her family. The man will visit her at night, but the rest of the time they generally live separate lives.

But what if they have a baby? In general, fathers have little or no responsibility for children, as the baby will be raised in the mother's home. However, that does not mean that the men have no responsibility: their responsibility is to care for the children of his sisters, nieces or aunts.

(Agencies)

Creating China's own Hollywood

Will Chinese cinema find its way abroad?

The nation's box office earnings grew 60 percent last year to set a record high of 10 billion yuan, about \$1.47 billion. The earnings were due largely to domestic hits like *Let the Bullets Fly* and *If You Are the One 2*.

After seven years of consolidation, the country's movie industry may be ready for Hollywood-like success.

Chinese people rediscovered their love of cinema last month while the rest of the world was shopping.

In December, a string of locally made feature films cleaned up at the box office, with *Sacrifice* and *Just Call Me Nobody*, each raking in 100 million yuan during the first week of release.

Let the Bullets Fly and *If You Are the One 2* did even better, grossing a total of 400 million yuan in their first week. *Let the Bullets Fly* even beat *Avatar* to set a Chinese single-day box office record of 60 million yuan.

The sudden resurgence of cinema comes six months after *Aftershock*, another Chinese feature, broke records by earning 100 million yuan in its first three days.

With the country's economy enjoying double-digit growth, it seems many people are prepared to spend 100 yuan for a movie ticket.

In the first half of last year, the country's box-office takings were up 86 percent on the same period the previous year, totaling 4.84 billion yuan.

Wang Yunping, a researcher at the Institute of Industrial and Technological Economics, an economic planning body under the National Development and Reform Commission, was quoted as saying the movie industry in China had "entered a period of phenomenal growth."

Chinese film critic Raymond Zhou is already predicting box-office takings are on their way to exceeding those of the US, where last year's gross is expected to be just below \$10.6 billion.

There is still a long way to go, but with takings having dipped slightly in the US last year, and with Chinese box office revenues predicted in a report by First Group to be 20 billion yuan next year, it is hardly an unrealistic prospect.

Foreign participation

It should be no surprise that foreign cinema operators are keen to get a slice of the growing market.

The Canadian group IMAX plans to open 100 new cinemas on the mainland, having signed contracts with a string of partners. In September, IMAX inked a deal with the Seoul company CJ CGV, which runs the largest chain of multiplexes in South Korea, to open 15 big-screen cinemas in China.

The Chinese film-making focus is also shifting onto the mainland, away from Hong Kong, says Sam Wong, a project manager for the Hong Kong produc-



Bona Chairman and CEO Yu Dong and actress Gong Li attend the ringing of the bell to open the Nasdaq in New York City.

Taylor Hill/Getty Images/CFP

tion company Best Video.

"With local Hong Kong movies, I haven't seen growth during the last several years. But for the big movies, the co-operations between Hong Kong and China, you can see the numbers going up and up," he says.

In the 1990s and the early 2000s, he says, most Chinese blockbusters were created solely by Hong Kong production companies, but now "most movies that we see are made by Hong Kong and Chinese."

"It's more mainland Chinese oriented," he says.

More screens

The country launched 150 new cineplexes and 1,000 screens last year, putting the total number of cineplexes and screens under 34 distributors nationwide at 1,670 and 6,000. About 80 percent of the 1,000 new screens are digital.

But 6,000 screens are far from enough to meet the demands of 1.3 billion. The US, with one third of China's population, has 40,000 screens.

As movie production studios like Huayi Brothers grow stronger, the movie industry will become a contributor to greater economic growth, but the limited number of cinemas could inhibit further expansion of the industry, says Gao

Jun, a manager of Beijing-based distributor New Movie-Alliance.

Gao says cineplex construction in second-tier markets will be a major business in the coming years because cinemas are scarce in many of the country's small- and medium-sized cities.

Because of the limited number of screens, cinema investments yield more stable revenue for domestic studios than final movies. Aside from producing films, large studios, such as China Film Group Corp. (CFG) and Beijing Polybona Film Distribution, all have distribution systems and cinema investments in their business portfolios.

The wholly owned cinema investment division of CFGC currently owns stakes in 20 cineplexes. By 2011, that number is expected to reach 50. Polybona launched its first cineplex in Beijing's You-town Shopping Center and will build 20 more in three to five years.

In order to deliver better performance in terms of its business stability, risk-proof capacity and cash flow, Huayi Brothers, which used to adhere strictly to the business of movie production, recently announced its plan to build six cineplexes in two years and 15 in five years.

(Agencies)



Domestic films like *Let the Bullets Fly* are setting new records at the box office.

Ren Yuming/IC Photo

Analyst

Capital market fuels domestic movie's overseas expansion

By Huang Daohen

Though the country's film industry has achieved record-setting box office returns, it still has to draw on capital markets to make its own Hollywood, says Lillian Yang, an analyst with Standard Chartered Beijing, which helped domestic film companies to raise funds.

Last month, PolyBona Film Distribution, one of the country's largest film distributors, became the third leading domestic movie studio to go public, this time on the Nasdaq.

The Beijing-based company offered \$80 million worth of shares for its IPO. Its chief executive Yu Dong says the reason the company chose to list in the US is because entertainment stocks are more mature there.

Yang believes PolyBona's US move aims to open the company to investment from abroad. "The global capital markets are beginning to recognize Chinese film," she says.

However, in addition to certain institutional investors, foreign capitals are still not allowed to invest directly in the nation's entertainment and publishing industry.

Polybona's domestic fellows are making similar moves. Huayi Brothers, the country's first privately-owned entertainment company, debuted on the new small-companies market in Shen-

zen late 2009. The state-run China Film Group recently announced its plan to publicly list in Shanghai.

"Business expansion and accumulation through the capital market is the top priority for domestic film companies," Yang says. But the market still needs improvement. The industry is short of agencies to supervise film production.

"This brings risks and prevents investments from more professional funds because investors can only rely on their judgment of the producer's credit," she says.

Yang, however, says there will be a completely secure financing system when the country's movie market reaches 50 billion yuan annually.

"Financial talents are expensive, and the 10-billion-yuan market is just not big enough," Yang says.

Yang says another problem that hinders Chinese film from being promoted worldwide is the perceived quality.

Most Western viewers expect all Chinese films to be about martial arts. The many Chinese films that have been successful with film critics rarely win audiences.

Now with access to better funding, Chinese films may be able to penetrate the world market, Yang says. "The most important thing is to make films that audiences really want to see."

Is it necessary to change city names for development?

By Zhao Hongyi

Last year, several cities in China changed their names in order to attract attention and gain economic benefits, according to Xinhua reports.

At the beginning of the year, the city of Leiyang, Hunan Province changed its name to Chailun, a nod to the fact that paper-making was discovered here 2,000 years ago; Taoyuan (peach blossom) in the same province changed to Taohuayuan (paradise of peach blossom); Xinzheng, Henan Province changed to Xuanyuan (name of one of the founders of the Han nationality); and Nanping, Fujian Province changed to Wuyishan City, paying homage to the Wuyi Mountains.

Many cities and counties change their names for the same reasons: to link their cities with historical figures or pursue economic benefits and development.

Xiangfan, Hubei Province, changed its name back to the original Xiangyang last December, which is what it was called during the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280). It claims to be the hometown of Zhuge Liang.

Xiangyang adopted the name Xiangfan in the 1950s, when Xiangyang and Fancheng counties merged. The State Council accredited the city in 1986 as one with rich culture and history – but few people recognized “Xiangyang.” That’s why the city government had been trying to change its name for a decade to better promote the city as a tourist destination.

The city is currently quarreling with Nan- yang, Henan Province, which also claims itself as the birthplace of Zhuge Liang.

Many Chinese cities have changed names in the past. The most noteworthy



Name changes are good for business for sign makers.

Li Fuhua/IC Photo

may be Zhongdian County in Yunnan Province – now known around the world as Shangri-La.

Other successful name changes include: Zhangjiajie, Hunan Province, which used to be Dayong; Dujiangyan, Sichuan Province, which used to be Guan County; and the tourist hotspot Jiuzhaigou, Sichuan Province, which used to be Nanping County.

“These were poorly developed cities before they changed their names in the 1980s. Then these cities and counties saw the rapid development of highways, air-

ports, tourism and their economies,” an official in Xiangfan City said.

But scholars warn that changing city and county names can have unintended consequences.

“The names are formed under certain historical, economic and political backgrounds,” Zhou Zhenhe, deputy director for the Association of Chinese Administrative Regions and Counties Study, said.

“Frequent changes of city names waste social resources, and no one can be sure the changes will bring positive effects,” he said.

Comment

A confused move

I just learned that I’m now a citizen of Xiangyang instead of Xiangfan! My parents told me that their life didn’t change at all: ID cards, property documents, business licenses and names of schools, railway stations, everything in the city stayed the same. I’m really puzzled why the hell the city felt it needed to change its name.

– Lemon, netizen in Xiangyang

Waste of social resources

It’s another type of bureaucracy and waste of social resources. Our government officials do nothing but daydream in their offices, waiting for budgets from the central government and to collect taxes from their citizens.

– Li Jian, commenter of a news story

Economic benefit

The point is to develop the economy, not change your names! To develop the local economy, you have many choices and alternatives. The basic premise is to develop more products, services, cultures and attractions – but not history! Names have their histories – leave them be.

– Han Maoli, professor of city planning and environment, Beijing University

Learn from world cities

Many cities in foreign countries have a long history, like Washington, New York, Stockholm, London. They emerged as world-class cities over the years, but they have never changed their names. Hard work is the only way to success, either for yourself or your city.

– Rodrigo Gary, student from Chile

Local gov’t trying to censor Confucian, other classical Chinese texts

By Pang Xiaoqiao

Local education authorities in Shandong Province, home of Confucius, said they would prohibit schools from using the full text of some Confucian texts.

The Shandong Provincial Education Department made this announcement last week in a regulation to strengthen management of its traditional culture education. The “bad content” of some classical Chinese books, such as from *Three Character Primer* and *Standards for Students*, might be objectionable to students and contrary to modern values, officials said.

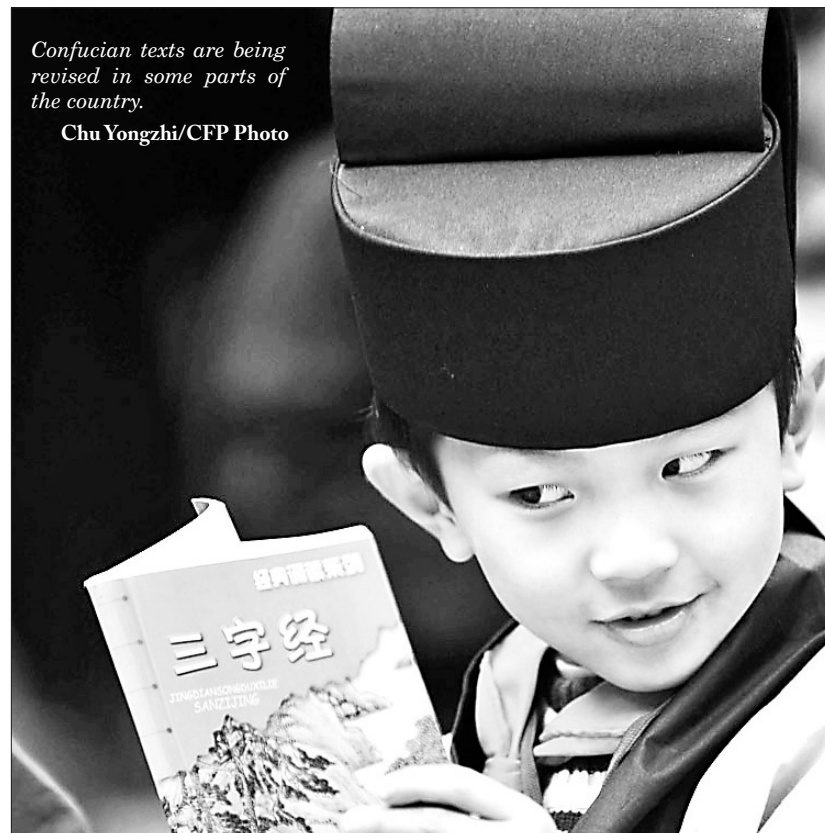
Similar cases were also seen in Hubei Province. Some schools have already provided students classic texts that are missing sentences like, “Of old, the mother of Mencius chose a neighborhood,” and, “In textbooks you will find girls with complexions like jade and houses made of gold.”

The former quotation appears in a story that teaches people the environment can influence one’s behavior.

The latter quote basically means through studying, one can gain success and fortunes will follow. But censors worry that conveys the wrong message – that knowledgeable people should eschew helping society in order to pursue personal gain.

Confucian texts are being revised in some parts of the country.

Chu Yongzhi/CFP Photo



Comment

Learning through different readings

We shouldn’t hide information just to cut off unpleasant details. In Italy, all of the teachers encourage us to learn about reality through different readings but never avoid any parts or particulars.

– Tea Fantigrossi, Italian exchange student studying at Beijing Lu He middle school.

Adult standards could fetter children’s thought

In the 100-year strategy of a nation, education is the most important and most basic, in which a slight change in one area can affect the situation as a whole. We should tell our children everything, and honestly. After learning and debating, children have the right to choose what to believe.

– Guo Zhien, doctoral student in cultural communication

Contrary to mainstream values

Classic literature is a product of history and should be recommended as elementary education, but some of their views are contrary to mainstream values. And things change. Can you imagine if we were still wearing the clothing of previous centuries?

– He Yingyi, CNR editor

Salud! - sorta

Red wine sales are booming, but behind the scenes the industry is more chaotic than people like to admit

By Wang Yu

A CCTV investigation recently stunned local red wine buyers. In Changli County, Hebei Province, some wine factories were producing fake wine using water, food coloring, alcohol and essence. All the products had labels of big overseas producers. More than 400,000 cases of such wines were put into the Chinese market last year.

It was an astonishing report to ordinary buyers, but insiders have long known about this dark side of the wine industry. Since 2005, when wine sales — especially of imports — began to boom, illegal dealers have been gradually entering the wine trade.

China has already become the “next big opportunity” for many foreign brands that face economic recession and saturated markets in the West. But what they must deal with here is a scene still in its infancy — which means chaos.

The boom

Red wine was first introduced to China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), but it never became an essential part of the culture. *Baijiu* and beer were the dominant drinks at Chinese tables until the late 1970s, when the country began its opening up.

But imported red wine remained a luxury for two more decades. In 2005, the import tax for red wines was finally lowered, allowing the market to grow — rapidly. Many international trade companies saw this new opportunity and began building a trading network to transfer their business to red wine.

Fueling the growth was an increase in consumer purchasing power. The media also did its part to advertise red wine as an elegant, high-class drink. Soon, Chinese families were stocking up, and red wine became popular as gifts. Companies in Europe and South America began expanding



A bottle of Lafite can sell for tens of thousands of yuan in China.



The imported red wine market has grown too fast for Chinese buyers who are still novices when it comes to wine.

CFP Photos



Red wine is a symbol of elegance in China, as elsewhere in the world.

There's a saying that's emerged in the last three years: French wine owners are in China, or they're on their way out.

into China due to their home countries' saturated markets.

“In China, if you organized a dinner party, serving red wine meant you had good taste,” said Shen Zichao, executive vice chief editor of *Wine Magazine*. “At the same time, local businessmen have replaced *baijiu* or whisky with red wine at business dinners. They tend to consume expensive wines, especially from France, which is a symbol of class.”

Meanwhile, local wines, sold at low prices, helped introduce the luxury to average consumers.

The pie has only gotten bigger for everyone. In 2007, imported brands occupied 8 percent of total red wine sales in China. By the end of last year, that number had reached 20 percent.

“There's a saying that's emerged in the last three years: French wine owners are in China,

or they're on their way out,” Shen said.

Chaos behind the scenes

The Changli revelation is an extreme case, but that insiders aren't surprised is a cause for concern.

The universally accepted process of importing wines is to import them via casks before pouring them into specially labeled bottles in local factories. The process is fraught with potential problems. There is no way to quality control the wine, because once a bottle is opened, it cannot be put on the shelf anymore.

There are also problems with pricing. Due to the huge native market, consumers sometimes hoard wines, driving the price of some luxury brands to 10 times the original.

In 2007, French brand Chateau Lafite's prices began to rise

in China. People eventually discovered Hong Kong agents were controlling the prices, as foreign wines have to stop in Hong Kong before entering the mainland.

There is also the inexperience of Chinese buyers. Some spend up to 30,000 yuan on a bottle of wine for no other reason than because the bottle is priced at 30,000 — they have no idea whether what they're buying is of high quality.

“Similar to fashion brands, luxury labels like Lafite usually have side labels that are much cheaper, aimed at ordinary buyers,” Shen said. “However, in China, a bottle of Lafite's side label now costs up to 10,000 yuan, up from 3,000. That's crazy.”

The high profit margins have attracted many red wine experts to start their own business. But middlemen get a huge chunk of the money too: it costs a lot of money to store wine, and it takes agents to go around to restaurants and bars to negotiate “entrance fees.”

And finally, while drinking preferences may have changed, drinking habits have not. At business dinners or group gatherings, for instance, etiquette dictates that diners chug full glasses of liquor, beer or, yes, wine. Multiple bottles can get emptied in a flash.

Out of the mainstream

For international red wine agents, the biggest challenge in the local market is the dominance of labels from well-established wine countries like France, Italy and Spain. To sidestep this competition, some dealers have chosen to import wine from other countries, with varying degrees of success.

Beijing Longvity International Trading Company is one of these dealers. The company started its

red wine business in 2004. Last year, it began to focus on Greek wines, which most Chinese buyers are not familiar with. In cooperation with the Greek embassy, the company has held wine tasting events in Beijing in an attempt to accelerate its business.

“Greek wine is a niche in China. We don't have to be afraid of severe competition and fake wine,” said company CEO Peter Zhu. “The quality of Greek wine is good, and the country's history helps us promote its wine. We have cooperated with five Greek wine villages and hope the number will reach 20 this year.”

Other companies are changing up their tactics. Sunrise Commerce, a longtime wine dealer based in Zhejiang Province, became the exclusive agent of Durfort-Vivens, a French wine village in Bordeaux. Some dealers like Sunrise Commerce now play the role of agents, drafting contracts with foreign wine villages directly to save cost.

But as choices increase, so does buyer confusion. In the West, red wine was first an essential part of daily meals, then a part of culture. In China, the order is reversed: agents have to make wine a fashionable before getting consumers to appreciate its function. It's no wonder that quality is sometimes lost in the mix.

“I think the chaos in the market may continue for at least five years, but the situation in major cities is changing,” Shen said. “People are willing to learn it.”

“When ordinary consumers go to the convenience store and on their way back buy a bottle of wine for dinner, that's when you can say the native market is mature.”

Better to teach bakery than give them bread



Orphans who graduate from SYB often find work in hotels and big bakeries.

Photos provided by SYB

By Liang Meilan

Established in 2008, a school called Shanghai Young Bakers (SYB) is famous among bakeries in Shanghai. Graduates from the school enjoy a good reputation for their traditional French bakery skills.

But if they don't tell, people will never know that all the students in the school are orphans.

SYB, the school, is actually an NGO relying on funds from foundations like Carrefour Foundation and Chi Heng Foundation.

The school was initiated by 12 French volunteers from the Junior Chamber of Commerce in France. The idea was borrowed from a similar project in Vietnam.

SYB, rather than collecting donations for its orphans,

offers one-year training in traditional French bakery so that they can integrate into society with a meaningful job upon graduation.

SYB is run by a team of volunteers with various backgrounds and nationalities.

Cecile Cavoizy, 30, from France, is one of the leaders. She has lived in Shanghai for the last eight years and joined SYB as a volunteer in June 2009.

"I was amazed by the energy of all the volunteers in ensuring the success of the orphan students," Cavoizy said. "And I was impressed by the number of organizations that joined forces to make the program work."

Like other SYB volunteers who practically dedicate all their free time to the program, Cavoizy has a full-time job and

can only work for SYB on evenings on weekends.

She is now mainly in charge of brainstorming ideas and going to meetings with partners.

Cavoizy beams with pride when talking about the school's latest big news: three of its most promising students will be sent to France for six months of bakery training at the prestigious Ecole Francaise de Boulangerie d'Aurillac.

"They can become teachers for the next generation of SYB students upon their return," she said. "And I'm so proud that our best students are excited and committed to help SYB grow."

Cavoizy said the students are mostly from outside Shanghai, from Henan, Anhui, Shandong and Guangxi provinces, who had never heard of

European bakery before joining the program.

Most of them develop a passion for it and strive to do well and complete their exams. A few pursue further education, but the majority find work for hotels like Four Seasons, Wagasa and Sofitel.

"I'm greatly moved that they are very ambitious and ready to put in extra hours in order to learn as much as possible and find good work after they graduate," Cavoizy said.

YSB's work helps address two needs, Cavoizy said.

On one hand, many NGOs help orphans go through compulsory education, but they are not always equipped to give them the skills to be independent in life afterwards. On the other hand, as the bakery industry grows rapidly



Cecile Cavoizy

in China, hotels and bakeries are struggling to find qualified bakers.

"Through the SYB training, we hope to address both these needs, by giving orphans useful training that will basically guarantee them a job after they graduate from the program," Cavoizy said.

Cavoizy, who is a human resources specialist, has experienced firsthand the pressure on fresh graduates to find jobs.

"A large number of orphans cannot even finish elementary school in China. But hopefully, SYB will help them finish their compulsory education and grant them the skills for finding a job," she said.

Although she works without any financial compensation, Cavoizy said she is determined to stay with SYB for as long as she can.

"I would say that it has become a part of my life now," she said. "And the students' spirits and toughness inspire me a lot. They gradually develop not only valuable skills but also real self-confidence, independence and a sense of community and team spirit. I think I've learned more from them than they've learned from the program."

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Increasing productivity with Beijing Coworking

By Liang Meilan

Many work-at-home professionals and freelancers choose to work in public spaces like coffeehouses, but what happens when these places get too noisy and distracting?

Perhaps try Beijing Coworking, designed for independent workers in the capital. It's a way for people to gather at various venues in town every week for the express purpose of working together – but independently.

Created by Michael Daugherty, 26, a startup entrepreneur from Boston who is working on an online company called Bespoke Row, Beijing Coworking began organizing meetings in the spring. There have been about 100 so far, with three to four people showing up each time. Twenty-four people are currently signed up for its weekly email.

Mostly the group meets at Mucha Cafe on Gongti Xi Lu and Costa Coffee in Raffles City.

As a work-at-home professional, Daugherty started Beijing Coworking because he got tired of working from home by himself. He visited Shanghai last spring and found a coworking group there called Xindanwei.

"I had a really memorable experience there," he said. "I found a project engineer who exchanged ideas with me on topics we are both interested in, and I got a lot of inspiration."

Back in Beijing, he organized the first Beijing Coworking meeting with some of his expat friends.

"I found the startup community in Beijing was sparse, not much like Boston or in Silicon Valley, where gatherings of startup entrepreneurs are frequently seen," Daugherty said.

The way it works is this: someone suggests a location via an online form (mpdaugherty.wufoo.com/forms/beijing-coworking), and then the group eventu-



Michael P. Daugherty (left) and other co-workers at Costa Coffee in Raffles City

Photo provided by Michael Daugherty

ally takes a vote.

At the meetings themselves, "even though coworkers usually concentrate on their own projects," Daugherty said, "everyone is open to helping everyone else."

Every other Wednesday, members who are working on startups discuss their goals for the next two weeks and the challenges they face. Then at the next meeting, they ask each other if they were able to achieve their goals.

"This can help us stay focused by providing a deadline. Otherwise, when you don't have to report to anyone, it's easy to convince yourself that it's OK to move deadlines back, and you therefore don't get as much work done," Daugherty said.

Besides startup entrepreneurs, Beijing Coworking also welcomes

people from other vocations. "It's particularly helpful for people who are their own boss, but anyone who doesn't have an office to go to for work would probably appreciate it," Daugherty said.

The small community faces two major challenges.

One is the cost of office space. Daugherty would like to rent a fixed venue in Beijing, but the cost may be prohibitive.

"When I was looking in the summer, a 200-square-meter office would cost 27,000 yuan per month, but we don't want to charge people more than 1,500 yuan a month membership," he said. "We'd have to have at least 18 people to cover the rent."

Another issue is geography. Coworking is an ideal for people

working on startups, but in Beijing, most local startups are located in Haidian District. Most expats, meanwhile, live in Dongcheng or Chaoyang districts.

"We'd love to bring these two communities together, but traveling between the two parts of town takes a long time. So if we just choose one location for an office, it would probably be good for one group, but not the other," Daugherty said.

Daugherty is encouraged by increased interest recently, and is determined to find a permanent location within the next few months.

"I hope that our group will become a hub for independent and creative people in Beijing so that people don't feel lost like I did when I first moved here," he said.

Online discussion puts focus on migrant children all over the country

By Liang Meilan

An online discussion hosted by the Foundation for Youth Social Entrepreneurship (FYSE) about the children of migrant workers is currently active online. It began on January 3 and will last until January 16.

FYSE's Beijing branch formerly shared an office building with Compassionate Compassion for Migrant Children (CMC), a nonprofit organization committed to helping children of migrant workers in China and their communities through social and educational programs.

Those interested in joining the discussion should visit socialinnovationmeetup.com. Experts will reply to all relevant postings.

Experts are from CMC and another leading NGO in the field, the Migrant Children Foundation.

FYSE is an organization dedicated to supporting young social entrepreneurs in the Asia Pacific region who want to tackle the most pressing social and environmental problems.

After hosting a social innovation Meetup on the topic of Migrant Children last year, FYSE has launched the online discussion to enable more people to join the discussion, to learn and to voice their opinion and experience.

"It is important to learn from people who might not be in Beijing and to provide them with learning opportunities," said Andrea Krause, FYSE executive director. "People from everywhere can go online whenever they have time and contribute."

Experts in charge of the discussion from the three organizations not only reply to the questions but

also share information about their efforts in helping migrant children.

So far the discussion is centered on how to provide education for migrant children and the quality of migrant schools. Other issues include how migrant youth can be integrated into the workforce.

Jonathan Hursh, founder of CMC, said one of the interesting things he learned several years ago seemed like a paradox at first. "The top graduates of middle school were returning to their villages, while those with lower marks stayed in the city," he said.

Migrant children only have one chance at entering college, and that's through the national college entrance exam, which they can only take in the city where they're legally registered. In other words, they have to leave Beijing to enter high school. Those who remain in the

capital are forced to drop out and try to enter the workforce or attend vocational training.

The only other option is to get lost in the shuffle of society.

"Migrants have informal jobs, they get informal education, they have access to informal healthcare and they live in informal shacks on informal land," Hursh said. "In short, they live informal lives. This is a big problem because it keeps them from accessing opportunities that reward them appropriately for the positive contributions they make in our cities."

The discussion is not just for expats. Although so far all posts are in English, Chinese replies are accepted and will be translated.

"We welcome suggestions for further discussion topics after this one, as the plan is to organize more of these forums," Krause said.

Event

Beijing International New Short Play Festival 2011

Beijing Innovative Theater Experience, a non-profit theater organization bringing together professional and amateur actors worldwide to present innovative theater, is holding its third annual International New Short Play Festival. Themed "Fish Out of Water," this year's festival plays on the humor and poignancy of living outside one's culture, featuring plays about foreigners in China. For more information, visit anna-grace.net.

Where: Penghao Theater, 35 Dongmianhua Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: January 6-16, 7:30-10 pm

Tel: 13520450019

Cost: 80-120 yuan for three nights

Forum: Current state of Sino-US relations and the context of public opinion

Two Sino-US relations experts, Professor David M. Lampton from Johns Hopkins University and Professor Tao Wenzhao from Tsinghua University, will present their opinions on how public opinion influences relations between the two most powerful nations in the world.

Where: Capital M, 3/F, 2 Qianmen Pedestrian Street, Dongcheng District

When: January 9, 4-5 pm

Tel: 6702 2727

Cost: 65 yuan, includes a drink

Salon: Yang Xiaoyu, China's rising violinist

The Bookworm invites Yang Xiaoyu, a concertmaster at the National Center of the Performing Arts, to give a private concert before discussing his career, his music, the difference between being a soloist and a concertmaster, and why concertmasters are so important to any orchestra, especially new ones.

Where: Bookworm, 4 Nansanlun Lu, Chaoyang District

When: January 9, 7:30-9 pm

Tel: 6431 2108

Cost: 30 yuan, 20 yuan for student

Learn to make traditional Chinese crafts

Lily's Showroom, an antique store at Gaobeidian Furniture Street, is holding a workshop for expats to learn to make Chinese folk crafts. Kite making, clay sculpting, calligraphy and other crafts will be taught in classes illustrated with tales and traditions of ancient China.

Where: Lily's Showroom, 3/F, Gaobeidian Furniture Jie, Chaoyang District

When: every weekend, 9 am - 5 pm

Tel: 13651348956

Cost: 100 yuan, includes material

(By Liang Meilan)

Children fitness clubs offer tailored program this month

By Li Zhixin

The cold may make children reluctant to exercise outside, but there are plenty of indoor fitness clubs geared toward children.

O'le Sports Center, a Canadian fitness center for children, is now hosting a FunGym program that aims to help children ages 2 and up develop their physical, cognitive, emotional, creative and social abilities through music, dance, gymnastics, sports, games and other activities. Adults and children both can take part in the program.

The program is led by Zhao Bing, former head of China's rhythmic gymnastics team, and Peng Yaping, former gymnastics world champion and ex-coach of the Canadian gymnastics national team.

"Many parents think sports are dangerous for kids, but they're not if done properly," Zhao said.

The program will also teach parents how to coach their children.

Zhao said parents should put their children's health and character education first. "We should foster them to be confident and to trust others, to be self-respectful and to respect others," she said.

Another children's fitness club, House of Knowledge, also began its registration process for its 11-week taekwondo, kung fu, ballet, creative dance, hip hop, baby sign language and music programs that start on



Fencing is a popular sport for Beijing children during weekends and holidays.

CFP Photo

Monday.

The kung fu class is led by a Shaolin master who will teach children ages 5 to 9 the art of Chinese kung fu, self-discipline and respect.

The baby sign language and music class will allow parents and babies less than 2 years old to enjoy music, and teach parents how to better understand their toddler's gestures.

O'le Sports Center

Where: No. 5, Dongshimen-cun, Baizwan Bridge, Dong Sihuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 8482 5891
Web: fungym.com.cn

Other children's fitness clubs

House of Knowledge

Where: Suit C511, Lufthansa Center, 50 Liang-maqiao Road, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6434 0088
Website: house-of-knowledge.net

Beilecheng Children's Gym

Where: Beside Ditan Park, Hepingli, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6429 9604
Website: bjblcetjlyxgs.pinsou.com

Beijing City Sea View Children's Club

Where: 58, Dongsanqu, Tiantongyuna, Chang-ping District
Tel: 8177 9379 / 9376
Website: csvclub.cn

CSI - Bally Total Fitness Club

Where: Building 13, 6 Guangze Lu, Wangjing, Chaoyang District
Tel: 8473 0098 / 0096
Website: wangjing.cn/ztbl

Beijing to raise downtown parking prices

By Zhao Hongyi

To further control the number of vehicles downtown, the municipal government will raise parking fees in four commercial areas on a trial basis starting April 1, according to the Municipal Traffic Administration.

The areas are the four corners of Third Ring Road: Zhongguancun West Park in the northwest; around Lufthansa Center in the northeast; the central business district (CBD) in the southeast; and Cuiwei Commercial Center in the west. The fees in these four blocks will be standardized at 10 yuan for the first hour of parking, and perhaps higher for additional time.

Short-term parking is set at a minimum of 15 minutes, Jiang Fuqing of the Municipal Traffic Administration said on Beijing Traffic Radio over the weekend.

Currently, the parking fees in these areas vary 2 to 8 yuan per hour. Some commercial parking lots charge 15 yuan per night (10 pm to 8 am). The fees fluctuate constantly as well.

"The purpose of new fees is to remind drivers to reduce the time they park cars in downtown centers and make use of public transportation," Jiang said. "Hopefully this will further ease traffic pressure."

"It's time to standardize the parking fees in the downtown area," said Wang Jiangyan, a private car owner and technical supervisor at an IT company. He believes the government should levy parking fees in a unified system and use the money to improve infrastructure.

"Authorities can also change some lanes into one-way streets," Wang said.

Beijing faces head-hurting gridlocks on a constant basis. There are an estimated 5 million private vehicles on the road, up from 2 million five years ago. In addition, there are nearly 2 million government vehicles.

The city recently adopted measures to limit the number of new-vehicle registrations in order to keep the number of new vehicles under 240,000 for the year. Many citizens urged the government to further adopt Shanghai's policy of limiting the number of license plate issuances, but the city said they preferred to wait before acting further.

Beijing is encouraging its citizens to use public transportation. In addition to opening more subway lines, the city has built 21 P+R (parking + transferring) garages in subway terminals beyond Fifth Ring Road.



Parking fees in downtown Beijing are currently unregulated.

CFP Photo

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyi@ynet.com

I have family and friends who will be visiting in May, and we're looking to travel to Shanghai. I heard about a high-speed rail, which I'm interested in taking. Do you know how to get tickets, and how long the journey would take?

The Beijing to Shanghai high-speed rail won't be operational until June, according to the Railway Bureau. The trip will only take four hours by this route. Ticket prices have yet to be determined.

How many homeschoolers are there in Beijing? We just moved here with two children: one is 8 and another is 12. We think homeschooling is better for them, but I'd like to get in touch with people who are in the same situation.

There are a few homeschoolers in town, and they have a Yahoo group that you can join by emailing Beijing_homeschoolers-owner@yahoo.com. Just be sure to introduce yourself.

I'm new to China and looking to learn Mandarin online. I'm looking more recommendations of quality websites.

Good websites include chinesepod.com, surfchinese.com, and masterchinese.com. All provide Chinese lessons for students of all levels. Some provide one-on-one online classes and most offer a free trial course.

Where can we buy fireworks for Chinese New Year's, and when do they go on sale? I live inside the Fifth Ring Road though, and I heard we may not be allowed to set off fireworks this year?

Fireworks go on sale 15 days prior to Chinese New Year's. You'll find them at makeshift stalls and in stores everywhere. You can set off fireworks within Fifth Ring Road during the 15-day spring festival, from February 3 to 17.

I bought a bus and subway IC card some months ago. I seldom used it but I found it was not working last week. Does IC card have a valid date?

The transportation IC card does not have a valid period. It might break if stored together with other magnetic cards. You can go to an IC card purchase spot and ask for a new one.

(By Wei Ying)

By He Jianwei

Since 2009, the National Center for Performing Arts (NCPA) has been inviting celebrated ballet dancers to present their most popular repertoire.

It has become an annual outing for many ballet fans – a rare chance to see the bewitching glamour of both classical and modern ballet and all its flexible movements, deft leaps and breathtaking swirls.

This weekend, at the Third International Ballet Gala of the NCPA, 12 dancers from American Ballet Theater, UK's Royal Ballet, Paris National Ballet, StaatsBallet Berlin, National Ballet in Canada and the National Ballet of China, will take the stage in turn to perform classics like *Swan Lake*, *The Corsair* and *Coppelia*, as well as pioneering modern works.



Among ballet's most celebrated dancers, Angel Corella remains in peak demand.

But these days, the 35-year-old principal dancer with American Ballet Theater (ABT) spends a lot of time with his own company: Corella Ballet Castilla y Leon.

Corella began his company in 2001. It took seven years of casting and rehearsals before it was ready for stage in 2008, a debut that revived classical ballet in Spain.

The last classical company in Spain was National Spanish Dance Company, which went modern 22 years ago when Nacho Duato, a modern ballet dancer and choreographer, took over the role of artistic director.

"Duato is a great choreographer and has done a wonderful job with the company. But he is not a classical choreographer and he had never done classical ballet in his life," Corella says. "To go from classical to modern is much easier than to go from modern to classical. Once you lose the classical technique, it is hard to bring it back."

But running a dance company is asking for trouble.

As the artistic director and principal dancer in his own company, Corella's work extends far outside his profession. He tries to lobby the government to increase the company budget, but often is left to pay out of pocket.

While his energy is entirely devoted to making his company the finest, he is always available when ABT needs him.

Corella joined ABT as a soloist in 1995 and was promoted to principal dancer in less than a year. "I was very lucky and not everyone has the same luck," he says.

As part of the NCPA gala, Corella will perform two programs with ABT.

The first, Stanton Welch's *We Got it Good*, is a Jazz solo created especially for him for the Kings of the Dance tour in 2006, showing his charisma and technique of swift swirling.

The second is the latest piece, *Solea*, a pas de deux with his sister Carmen, created by flamenco choreographer and dancer Maria Pages for a premiere at New York City Center last March.

Pages created it to combine ballet with flamenco music's complex rhythms and vocals. "I find combinations of flamenco and classical ballet to be highly interesting with enormous potential to enrich both forms of dance," Pages says.

The piece will be Corella's first performance with his sister, although the two have danced independently for more than 20 years. "Carmen is really tall, so Pages wanted to use us because of the physical similarity and the similarity of our approach," he says.

If Corella is the most demanded male dancer, then Russian-born Polina Semionova is the top ballerina.

The 26-year-old star joined the Staatsballet Berlin as a principal dancer when she was 17. She is regarded as a prima ballerina and is one of the youngest dancers to achieve this kind of recognition.

Even as a teen she had clear goals for her ballet career. When Vladimir Malakhov, the artistic director of Staatsballet Berlin, offered her a corps de ballet position, she rejected it. "If it had been a choice between the Bolshoi/Mariinsky corps de ballet and the Berlin corps de ballet, I would have taken the Bolshoi/Mariinsky offer," Semionova says.

After turning down Malakhov's contract, he gave her the chance to join his company as a first soloist. "He believed in me more than I believed in myself. I'm thankful for that, because it is important to have someone (like that) in the beginning of my career giving me this chance," she says.

Semionova is not only a gifted dancer, but also a social media phenomenon. Her appearance in Herbert Groenemeyer's video "Last Day" made her a big hit on YouTube, and she has 40,000 fans in her Facebook page.

A biography of her young life is being published by German writer Gerhard Haase-Hindenberg. The book focuses on the first half of her career. Haase-Hindenberg travels with her when she is on tour, and in Berlin they meet two to three times per week for two hours.

"At first I was a little bit skeptical, as I thought it would be better to do this when I was older, but then it brought back so many memories," she says. "I remembered some very nice times and also more challenging times, the time when I grew up and what my family went through. It is nice to be pushed to remember all of these things."

At the gala, she will dance two pas de deux pieces with her elder brother Dmitry Semionov.

A ballet

Superstars gather



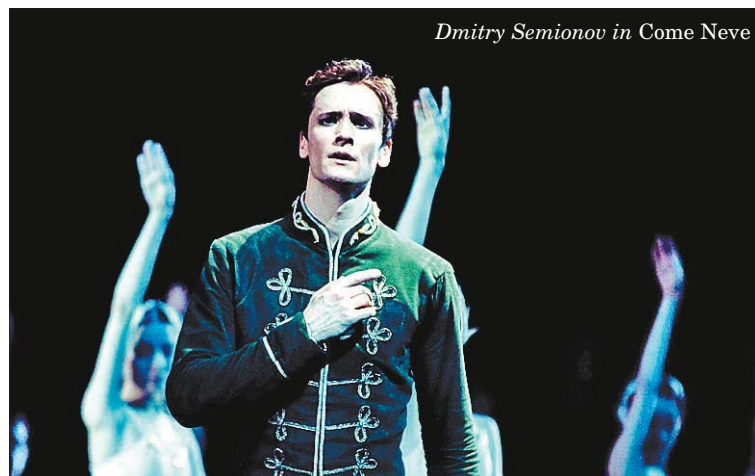
et gala

on Beijing's stage



Angel Corella and Carmen Corella in Solea

Photos provided by the NCPA



Dmitry Semionov in Come Neve

"To go from classical to modern is much easier than to go from modern to classical. Once you lose the classical technique, it is hard to bring it back."

— Angel Corella

"I remembered some very nice times and also more challenging times, the time when I grew up and what my family went through. It is nice to be pushed to remember all of these things."

— Polina Semionova

Program

We Got It Good

Dancer: Angel Corella (American Ballet Theater)

Coppelia Pas de Deux

Dancer: Alina Cojocaru, Johan Kobborg (Royal Ballet)

Come Neve

Dancer: Polina Semionova, Dmitry Semionov (Staatsballet Berlin)

Black Swan Pas de Trois

Dancer: Emilie Cozette, Stephane Bullion, Florian Magnenet (Ballet de l'Opera National de Paris)

Solea

Dancer: Carmen Corella, Angel Corella (American Ballet Theater)

Giselle Pas de Deux

Dancer: Guillaume Cote (The National Ballet of Canada), Cao Shuci (The National Ballet of China)

Rhapsody

Dancer: Alina Cojocaru, Johan Kobborg (Royal Ballet)

Le Corsaire Pas de Deux

Dancer: Polina Semionova, Dmitry Semionov (Staatsballet Berlin)

Etudes

Dancer: Florian Magnenet (Ballet de l'Opera National de Paris), Guillaume Cote (The National Ballet of Canada), Zhang Jian (The National Ballet of China)



Polina Semionova and Dmitry Semionov in Le Corsaire Pas de Deux

The Third International Ballet Gala of NCPA

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 8-9, 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-880 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Local bookstore helps authors find their audience



Alex Pearson, founder of The Bookworm

“Chinese authors don’t know how to introduce their books to an audience. They are reluctant to ‘sell’ their works”

By Chu Meng

The two-story yellow house first appeared across from Sanlitun Bar Street in 2002.

Once known for its rare collection of English books, today it is a one-of-a-kind literary salon.

Inside, soft music filters through the rooms and mingles with the aroma of strong coffee. People perch along a bar that serves coffee, cocktails and soft drinks. Others sit at tables, talking, reading or ordering dishes with clever literary names. A lecture is being presented in an adjacent room.

The Bookworm is a home away from home – a workshop for foreign and English-speaking Chinese book lovers – from 9 am until 2 am every day.

In December, this pearl of Sanlitun made the list of *Lonely Planet’s* “Top 10 Bookstores,” being mentioned together with iconic literary venues such as Shakespeare and Company in Paris, City Lights Books in San Francisco and Daunts of London.

It was Asia’s only bookstore to make the list.

That success has a lot to do with Alex Pearson, a character who is much The Bookworm’s owner as its host. Early on she had a vision of making the business more than “book sales and loans.”

Under her leadership, The Bookworm has become a community. “We love to be needed, we love to be loved and we search for what the community wants,” she says.

The desire to create a complete venue for book and music lovers to network drove her to stock the best-known original English books and Chinese books in translation, as well as to build the venue into a restaurant, bar, library and shop.

And since 2009, its influence has expanded as it hosts annual literary and science festivals.

Pearson said that there is a large expat community in Beijing, ever growing and highly educated, comprising professionals, diplomats, teachers, students and entrepreneurs in all fields.

There is also an ever growing community of highly educated English-speaking Chinese eager to know more about the culture and history of foreign countries. “We strive to support both of these communities by hosting literary, community, environmental and networking events,”



Expats and English-speaking Chinese talk and meet friends in the salon-style lounge area of The Bookworm in Sanlitun. Photos provided by Alex Pearson

she said.

Pearson, the daughter of a diplomat, first came to Beijing in 1982. Her diverse intellectual pursuits led her to earn a degree in Chinese at the University of Westminster before returning in 1992 to study at the Central Conservatory of Music.

Her entrepreneurial skills were honed through a series of cultural enterprises – The Bookworm itself began as a simple book exchange program.

The years since have seen a remarkably swift expansion of activities. Pearson added talks, quizzes and music nights onto her already original model. Today there are five Bookworms, with plans for more after the



Many expats find The Bookworm a home away from home.

present venues are fully developed.

But being a modern-day salon is only one reason The Bookworm made the Top 10.

More important is the store’s remarkable effort to promote Chinese literature to international readers.

The Bookworm has expanded from providing books in English and books introducing China to offering a library of Chinese literature in translation.

“Chinese literature is still marginalized on the international market, mostly due to ignorance of what is out there. And yet there is a huge amount of great writing,” Pearson says. The Bookworm is her way to make it accessible to international readers.

While China’s cinema has always had a place just outside the Hollywood mainstream, its literature has been mostly ignored due to linguistic and cultural barriers.

But even more crippling has been the lack of a production chain for getting Chinese books into English.

While directors take their works to international festivals in hopes of landing a distribution deal, rare is the Chinese

author who attends one of the many long-running international book fairs – an essential step in publishing that goes largely ignored in China.

To compensate, Pearson routinely brings the stars of Chinese literature to The Bookworm, giving greats like Mo Yan, Yu Hua, Bi Feiyu, Hong Ying, Murong and Miao Wei the chance to connect with international readers and spread their work.

She has another 20 contemporary Chinese authors lined up to speak at The Bookworm International Literature Festival in March. “We hope that by giving them a platform to connect with the international stage, they can soon be translated and published in foreign languages.”

Chinese memoirs are especially popular abroad, as foreign readers use them as windows framed by personal experience. But more truthfully, all China books sell well since they appeal to international readers’ curiosity about the people and country.

Pearson says 40 authors and publishers from the West have confirmed their plans to attend the upcoming literature festival. They are coming to explore the market and unearth literary treasures that could sell back home.

“Chinese authors don’t know how to introduce their books to an audience. They are reluctant to ‘sell’ their works,” she says.

But sell they must, because the production chain begins with the author.

Authors need publishers, publishers need scouts and agents, scouts need knowledge and networks, literary works need translations and translators need salaries.

And foreign publishers need books that will sell.

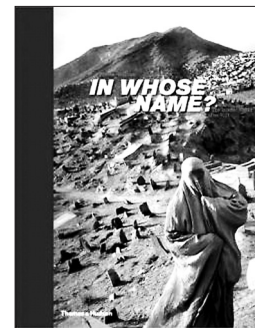
China is only just beginning to build a chain to enable international publishing, and one day the individuals and organizations involved may make China’s top authors known.

“However, how does one define success? A more traditional bookstore probably makes a lot more money. But we are definitely going somewhere else,” Pearson said.

She loves to meet Chinese authors, international publishers or translation crews and she enjoys walking and cycling around Beijing, even in wind and pollution. The dust, she says, helps her understand a bit more about China.

Trends Lounge book listing

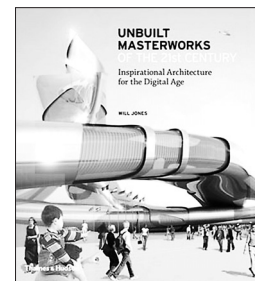
Located at The Place, Trends Lounge is a bookstore and cafe with a wide selection of international art, design and architecture books.



In Whose Name? The Islamic World after 9/11

By Abbas, 272pp, Thames & Hudson, 389 yuan

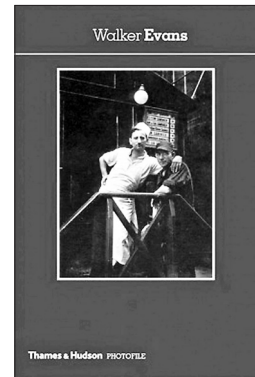
On September 11, 2001, photographer Abbas watched the World Trade Center towers fall in New York – live on Siberian TV. It spurred him to begin a journey through the Islamic world that would last seven years. The photographs published are the final result of that project.



Unbuilt Masterworks of the 21st Century: Inspirational Architecture

By Will Jones, 400pp, Thames & Hudson, 416 yuan

This book features 100 of the best unbuilt projects proposed since the turn of the millennium by some of the world’s greatest contemporary architects, including Norman Foster, Rem Koolhaas/OMA, Foreign Office Architects, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and Zaha Hadid, as well as rising stars such as Jürgen Mayer H Architects and Asymptote. Arranged in sections according to function, the projects are presented in detail through texts that consider the importance of the designs.



Walker Evans

By Gilles Mora and Walker Evans, 144pp, W. W. Norton, 116 yuan

Walker Evans photographed Depression-era America in the 1930s with a constant striving for neutrality. Nevertheless, the sculptural subtlety of his images and the close attention he pays to both people and things marked an entire generation of artists.

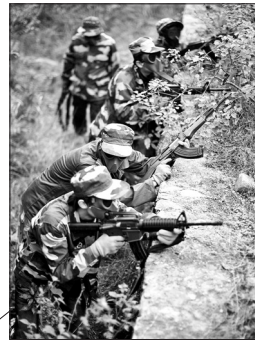
(By He Jianwei)

Ex-soldiers take up air guns for

By Wang Yu

Counter-Strike (CS) has long had a strong following of Chinese players. But for real military enthusiasts, a video game can hardly satiate their thirst for real combat. Combat fans looking for a more real experience have started organizing combat outings in the suburbs using model guns with plastic balls to stand in for their AKs.

Among these "real world CS" players is one team made up entirely of retired soldiers. A testament to their years of military training, even their name is enough to strike fear into the hearts of their opponents. Among the players, they are known as the best of the best.



Joining the team

Ice Qin is a car salesman in Tianjin. The 27-year-old sales manager served in the People's Liberation Army for three years before retiring in 2006.

Recently Qin bought a model gun to join a local CS team, Black Pigeon. It was a second-hand G36C: a replica of German manufacturer Heckler & Koch's G36 assault rifle. He accessorized his gun with an optical sight and a silencer.

"We fight with other local teams on the weekends, and Black Pigeon is always the best. All of our members are retired soldiers, and some used to be scouts in the army," Qin says.

Qin uploads photos of the team's training sessions at a CS park in the suburbs. Its players are dressed with in British combat uniforms with knee pads, military boots and blinkers. As in a real platoon, the team members are assigned different roles such as infantry and sniper.

"There are venues in the city and the suburbs. We usually rent a suburban venue for training every week. It's like doing sport with guns," Qin says.

Most teams model themselves on a foreign military: the US, UK and Germany's are most popular. Members wear the uniforms and use

only the equipment of that military.

The goal is to make each outing as much like real combat as possible, though on occasion this can frighten bystanders. Wang Rui, a CS player, says he used to train on a mountain with his team and once ran into a group of confused Korean tourists. Offering no explanation, they saluted the tourists and continued their exercises.

"This kind of thing happens all the time. It's always interesting to see 10 guys from a team show up at a restaurant in their uniforms. I think it gives the other diners something to talk about," Wang says.

Birth of a scene

Laoyan, the team leader of Black Pigeon, compares real CS to sports.

"You have to organize a team and get all the members to commit to spending their time. Everyone has to know each other and train together so the group can improve," he says.

Black Pigeon was organized last May and has since trained every weekend. Training begins in the morning and continues as long as the members are able. Like real military training, the morning schedule is tight while the afternoons encourage free combat.

"The game is a test of both mental and physical ability, and you can't fight another team without systematic training. We believe that if

you want to join in, you should treat the game seriously," Laoyan says.

Laoyan started playing live CS 10 years ago after his time in the army, but it wasn't until recent years that the scene boomed. The popularity may have something to do with the introduction of electric-powered model guns: previously, guns had to be driven by heavy air tanks.

Most players are office worker types out to do something unique – people who have the money to drop 5,000 yuan on an entry-level gun by Marui.

"Marui started to make electric powered model guns in 1996. In recent years, some domestic toy factories have started to copy these guns," Laoyan says.

Currently Black Pigeon is on training hiatus because the low temperatures can damage their model guns.

Stuck in the grey area

Most players are reluctant to talk about the scene because their model guns are illegal.

Although plastic bullets cannot cause fatal injuries, they can still break glass that is 5 millimeters thick when fired from within 1 meter. The old air-powered guns are even

more forceful. Most games forbid shots closer than 3 meters.

"So it is important to wear protection. Some people wear masks to protect their faces," Laoyan says.

Qin got his G36C used from another player he found online. While it's easy to find dealers for the plastic guns, most dealers are reluctant to sell to a new contact until they feel the relationship is "safe."

Police have launched several campaigns to collect such illegal model guns from civilian owners, but demand keeps the gray market alive.

"Before they passed new laws to ban model guns, these were available in any toy shop," Laoyan says.

"I do understand why the government decided to ban model guns. Some products could be adapted to shoot steel or lead bullets, and certain model guns could even be modified into real guns. As ex-soldiers, we know the importance of weapon control," Laoyan says.

The definition of an illegal model gun depends on the power it can generate. Most CS players said they would prefer that the model gun market be regulated rather than forbidden.

"Playing CS is about living out our military dreams. It's the dream of protecting others, not killing them," Wang says.



Geared up for battle
CFP Photos



Black Pigeon players meet on weekends to practice combat in the suburbs.

Photo by Qi Hao

Shopper's suggestions for Chinese New Year's gift list

By Annie Wei

Beijing Today is expanding its team of product scouts. This week we spoke to An Xu, a 28-year-old expert online shopper who loves picking out gifts for friends and families.



Pillowcase in black, 260 yuan; blue fur, 158 yuan

Photos by An Xu

Pillowcases – embroidered or fur

Many people change blankets, sofa covers and pillowcases according to the season. "I like buying pillowcases, as they are the easiest things to change in your living environment," An said.

She recently purchased an embroidered pillowcase from southwest China. "The pattern is sophisticated and creates a feel of luxury," she said.

An also bought another one in blue fur (158 yuan) from beryl-garden.taobao.com. "It looks so ready for cuddling, and the color highlights my gray sofa," she said.



World Health Store counter at Gongti
Photo provided by Ivy Leung

Healthcare

For her parents, An said she always prefers healthcare products.

She goes to the World Health Store, owned by Australian Drew Campbell. The store recently opened two new locations near Workers Stadium and in Lidu.

The stores carry imported brands like Lifestream International, a New Zealand brand. Its Bioactive Spirulina, at 835 yuan, is good for detoxifying heavy metals, An said.

Right now, free VIP membership is being offered at the mini stores upon any purchase. The VIP membership card – usually valued at 125 yuan for the first year – entitles customers to 10 to 20 percent off regular priced items.

World Health Store – Gongti

Where: April Gourmet, 5 Xingfu Yicun Xi Li, Chaoyang District

Open: 7 am – midnight

Tel: 6417 7970



Tissot, 6,750 to 7,650 yuan
Photos provided by Tissot

Longines or Tissot watches

A growing number of Chinese young men love watches, especially those by luxury brands. "I cannot offer Chopard or Patek Philippe. Brands like Longines or Tissot are more entry-level," An said. "The latest Tissot costs less than 10,000 yuan, and can be a good

gift for a boyfriend on Valentine's day."

Time City

Where: 112-113, Floor 1, AMP Plaza, 138 Wangfujing Avenue, Dongcheng District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Wine openers

An planned to buy just one wine opener for her friends' wine nights, but after purchasing a sleek black one (80 yuan), she decided to buy a second set in red (350 yuan).

Magic Pantry

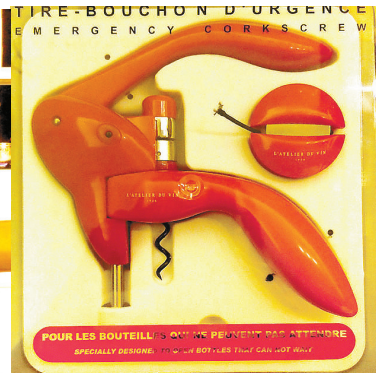
Where: D108, Nali Patio, 81 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 8 pm

Tel: 5208 6001



Wine opener, 350 yuan



Photos by An Xu



Lamp, 120 yuan; clock, 80 yuan



Photos by Sardine Kou

Vintage items

Quite a few stores advertise vintage-looking items that are not really vintage, An said. Taobao is a good source for old-time items, but be sure to properly vet them first. With a little research, happy results will ensue.

An has purchased several vintage items for her cousin, a creative director for an advertising company. "He likes simple and functional designs," she said. Among seven vintage clocks (80 to 150 yuan) and two lamps (80 to 120 yuan), An said that her cousin liked the old factory-style working lamp the most. "It reminds us of the working environment of our parents," she said.

The pity about buying vintage items from Taobao is most vendors have small inventories – only one or two pieces.



This week's shopper, An Xu

Photo provided by An Xu

Dining in cafeteria-style restaurants

By Annie Wei

Restaurants in China 30 years ago paid little attention to ambience, decoration and attentive service. The most memorable thing about dining in the 1980s was cafeterias where large groups of people could get together and have communal meals.

Today, these cafeterias are reserved for college dining halls and office buildings. But *Beijing Today* found three restaurants in this style that cater to modern sensibilities, designed for people who want a whiff of nostalgia with their meal.

There is a golden rule for dining in these places: the bigger your group, the merrier your experience.

The old North Korean restaurant

This restaurant has been around for a while. It's a simple place for a simple meal: cold noodles (10 yuan), beef and rice in a stone bowl (18 yuan) and spicy beef (15 yuan). Many old Beijingers like its cold noodles. The soup is sweet-and-sour flavor and the noodles are chewy.

The service is still in the 1980s style: you have to order at a cash counter and get your own food at the food counter. The waiters barely pay any attention to you.

Huatian Yanji Canting

Where: 181 Xisi Bei Dajie, Xicheng District

Open: 10 am – 9 pm

Tel: 6615 3292

Cost: Average 25 yuan per person



Cold noodles, 10 yuan

YY/CFP Photo



Roasted Yunnan fish, 28 yuan

YY/CFP Photo

Pingwa Sanbao – 24-hour dining spot

Dining in Sanlitun doesn't have to break the bank. About a 15-minute walk south from the Village, you'll find inexpensive places like Pingwa Sanbao that are great for group dining.

From the outside, Pingwa Sanbao looks like a small, humble place. But the interior is surprisingly spacious and interesting. The restaurant offers many different items at reasonable prices, like a big bowl of Shaanxi noodles for 12 yuan.

Sanbao refers to "three treasures": Shaanxi noodle, pepper chicken and yangrou paomo, which are bite-sized Shaanxi baked bread stewed in rich lamb broth.

Many Shaanxi natives have recommended the restaurant's Shaanxi noodles because of their authenticity. Qinzhen mipi (7 yuan) is the restaurant's specialty. Mipi is a rice-based noodle popular in the ancient town of Qinzhen in southern Shaanxi. It is made from ground rice with water, then steamed on a tray. The surface of the rice sheets must be brushed with oil to prevent the pieces from sticking together. Then the sheets are cut into strips and drizzled with red pepper oil. Mipi is served on top of bean sprouts and other condiments.

For other Shaanxi food, try suantang shuijiao (14.5 yuan), dumplings served in a hot and sour clear broth garnished with coriander leaves.

Jiaomaji (25 yuan for half, 45 yuan for whole) is highly recommended for group diners who like spicy chicken. The young chef who is responsible for the jiaomaji slices the chicken into small pieces by hand. In this way, the meat can absorb the flavors better, he said. The chicken is mixed with scallions and a bag of sauces and poured into a small bowl of red pepper oil. You can smell the strong fragrance of Chinese peppers and scallions when it's served.

There are eight kinds of homemade yogurts (6 to 12 yuan) as well as a dozen cold dishes customers can select at the counters.

Pingwa Sanbao has become the cafeteria of the neighborhood's office workers and residents. During peak hours, one has to wait for seats. It's also a convenient spot to go after a night out at the bars.

The grill counter has a wide selection, from Yunnan roast fish (26-28 yuan) to grilled lamb or mutton ribs (3.5 yuan per 50 grams; minimum order

starts from 500 grams), to a silkworm chrysalis (4 yuan) and Japanese eel (12 yuan). You can also order grilled vegetables like leek (6 yuan), needle mushroom (8 yuan), bacon roll (6 yuan) and tofu roll stuffed with needle mushroom (6 yuan).

Zhongfangjie

Where: Jia 10 Xiangjunzhuang Lu, Zhongfangjie, Chaoyang District (opposite No 80 Middle School)

Open: 24 hours

Liujiayao

Where: Liujiayao subway station, Nansanhuan Zhong Lu, Fengtai District

Open: 7 am – 10 pm

Cost: Average 20 yuan per person



Qinzhen mipi, 7 yuan

Jun Ying/CFP Photo



Yangrou paomo, 15 yuan Fan Jiashan/CFP Photo



Beef ball, 32 yuan per serving

Zhu Wanchang/CFP Photo

Chewy beef ball hotpot

The Chaozhou Beef Ball Hotpot near the Ministry of Agriculture's former canteen is a must-try for local gourmets.

Chaozhou is a southern city in Guangdong Province; its beef balls are traditional street foods that have been around for a hundred years.

We recommend the 70-yuan hotpot basic set with broth, 10 beef balls and 10 beef-tendon balls, dry tofu (8 yuan), green vegetables (6-8 yuan) and satay sauce (2 yuan).

The beef balls are so chewy that many diners wonder if they can bounce up after being dropped on the floor.

In the traditional way, the beef balls are made from fresh leg meat. The beef has to go through a series of complicated procedures to become elastic.

Compared to local Beijing lamb or Sichuan hotpot, the Chaozhou one is much lighter. Sometimes, people who are used to strong flavors might think it too bland.

Chaozhou Niurouwan Huoguo

Where: 11 Nongzhanguan Nan Li (east side of Ministry of Agriculture)

Open: 5:30-9:30 pm

Tel: 5919 1567

Cost: Average 40 yuan per person

Other recommendation

Hexie Dashitang

Hunan cuisine

Where: A-16 Nanxincang, 22 Dong-sishitiao, Dongcheng District

Open: 10 am – 11 pm

Tel: 6409 6605

Cost: Average 60 yuan per person

Fuhao Fantang

Cantonese cuisine and hotpot

Where: 4 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6586 4488

Cost: Average 100 yuan per person

Light amid dismal landscape

By He Jianwei

Huang Xingyu, 35, describes his latest solo exhibition as "light," but it's hard to fathom why: his paintings are overwhelmingly dark, with only beams of light appearing on portraits or grotesque objects like human organs.

"A beam, rather than radiant light, is like the feeling projected forcibly on our hearts from the outside world," Huang said. "Light does not give me the feeling of brightness and warmth; it reflects the existence of darkness."

Huang has explored the theme of light since 1999, when he created "Vision

and Growth" as a graduation project. He depicted Icarus, who in Greek mythology attempts to fly away from Crete using wings fashioned by his father from wax and feathers. But in doing so, he ignores his father's warning and flies too close to the sun, which melt his wings and plummet him into the sea.

"Icarus embodies my feelings. He yearns for the sunshine but is hurt by it," Huang said. "This may explain why the feelings light brought to me were not warm – maybe my subconscious wanted to keep some distance from it."

"We see Icarus as a figure who escapes

reality to seek freedom. But he gets so close to the sun that he falls, just like people who get too close to power."

In most of his paintings, Huang expresses the feeling of loneliness. "The scenes in my pictures correspond with my inner thoughts and demands," he said.

For instance, in his work *Habitat*, Huang paints a hyena in a central position and humans in subordinate positions. The hyena wears a halter that signifies its wildness has been tamed. "There are always some elements in our heart that make us feel uneasy," Huang said.

Huang said when he was younger, he thought he could change the world, but he's since realized painting's limitations. "What my works try to remind you is to care about the people around you," he said.

The exhibition, which features 16 pieces, opened last Friday at Star Gallery.

Light – Huang Xingyu Solo Exhibition

Where: Star Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 27, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9224



5 Friday, January 7

Movie Burn After Reading (2008)

This black comedy is about a CIA agent who decides to write a memoir about the CIA after getting fired. His wife wants a divorce and copies his personal files onto a compact disc. The disc ends up in the hands of two gym employees who attempt to benefit from the discovery.

Where: China Film Archive, 3 Wenhuiyuan Lu, Xiaoxitian, Haidian District

When: 7 pm
Admission: 20 yuan
Tel: 8229 6153

Nightlife Slap

This Beijing-based indie funk rock and folk band draws inspiration from streets and marketplaces, criticizing the unequal treatment of individuals and confronting the beauty and ugliness of human nature.

Where: Mao Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm
Admission: 50 yuan
Tel: 6402 5080

Exhibition Stranger – Fei Jun Works

Fei focuses his attention on the interaction between virtual and physical space in his interactive installation project.

Where: offiCina, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 16, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9462



Sunday, January 9

Exhibition 13 Days – Peng Weiheng's Solo Exhibition

Peng paints himself using the methods of 16th and 17th century painters who depicted myth on canvas.

Where: Hanmo Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 25, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 6435 8922

Nightlife Goumao and Wu Zhuoling

Goumao is a Taiwanese musician who writes many songs for pop stars, and Wu leads a Beijing trip-hop band called Wednesday's Trip.

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiadaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm
Admission: 30 yuan
Tel: 6401 4611

Movie Juha (1999)

Juha and his wife Marja lead simple country lives, spending most of their days farming and tending to livestock. But their life changes when a man named Shemeikka asks them for help with his broken-down convertible.

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 15 yuan, 10 yuan for students
Tel: 8459 9269



6 Saturday, January 8

Movie Tinker Bell and the Great Fairy Rescue (2010)

A sequel of *Tinker Bell and the Lost Treasure*, this animated film tells the story of how Tinker Bell met Lizzy Griffins, a little girl who believes in the power of pixie dust and the magical land of fairies.

Where: Lady Book Saloon, 69 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 7:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6270 1928

Nightlife Peng Tan

The lead vocalist of Dada, a former Chinese pop rock band named after the cultural movement Dadaism, was inspired by Chinese rock star Cui Jian.

Where: Mako Livehouse, 36 Guangqu Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 8:30 pm
Admission: 80 yuan
advance purchase, 100 yuan at the door

Tel: 5205 1112 Exhibition



Tribute to Childhood – Zhang Guangxian's Solo Exhibition

This exhibition presents Zhang's memories of childhood in paintings that cherish the lost spirit.

Where: Line Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 20, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9916

Upcoming

Concert Song Fei and Beijing Symphony Orchestra

Song, an erhu soloist who is called the queen of Chinese folk music, will collaborate with Beijing Symphony Orchestra.

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 12, 7:30 pm
Admission: 120-400 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Stage in February

Concert

Leon Fleisher Piano Recital

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 4, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-580 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

A Tribute to Teresa Teng

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 8, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-1,080 yuan
Tel: 5166 1145

Sun Yingdi Piano Recital

Where: Multi-functional Theater of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 200-280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Andras Schiff Piano Recital

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 27, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-680 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Dance

Dance of Desire

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: February 12-14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-380 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Drama

The Life Opinions of Two Dogs

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: February 12-14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-380 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Out of Order

Where: Theater Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 19-21, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-30 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Opera

Verdi's Opera: La Traviata

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 13-17, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-580 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

(By He Jianwei)

Obesity, environment triggers early puberty

By Han Manman

If it seems like children today are growing up too fast, that may be because they are.

For the last several years, doctors have been noticing more and more children are beginning puberty early: especially in China.

Early puberty becoming common

Known medically as sexual precocity, early puberty is spreading at an alarming rate throughout the country. Doctors have reported cases of babies entering puberty and girls pregnant at age 9.

Recently, three infant girls in Wuhan, Hubei Province were discovered to be developing breasts. Doctors say the early development may be linked to a baby formula contaminated with female hormones.

While the Ministry of Health disputes these claims, it took the initiative to publish a guide for doctors that defines early puberty as the expression of secondary sexual charac-

teristics in girls younger than age 8 and boys younger than 9. These include menstruation, breast or genital enlargement and underarm or pubic hair.

Kong Yuanyuan, who runs the city's first clinic to specialize in early puberty at the Beijing Maternal and Child Healthcare Hospital, says incidences of early puberty are on the rise not only in China, but around the world. Girls are more likely to experience the effects.

A 2010 study by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that twice as many white girls as boys in the US entered puberty between the ages of 7 to 10.

Warning signs

There are signs to determine if a child is progressing through puberty at an abnormal rate, Kong said.

"It's true that children are becoming (mentally) mature at younger ages than they did decades ago, but physical puberty normally begins between the ages 8 and 13 for girls and 9 and 14 years old for boys. The process takes years to complete," Kong said.

The signs of early puberty are the same as normal puberty. Girls begin to develop breasts and pubic hair and soon after begin their menstrual cycle, while boys develop enlarged testicles and pubic hair and their voice deepens.

As a parent, it may be hard to notice some of these more visual signs: focus instead on less private visual signs like breast development, underarm hair, unusual growth spurts, acne and body odor.

Going through puberty early can be difficult for a child both emotionally and socially, Kong said.

Girls may be confused or embarrassed about going through the physical changes well before any of their peers. During their teen years they may be at a risk of having poor social relationships, depression, eating disorders and substance abuse.

Boys can become more aggressive and develop a sex drive inappropriate for their age. They may have trouble relating to their peers and concentrating in school.

If your child shows signs of early puberty, it is important to get help immediately. The longer the delay before getting treatment, the harder the hormonal changes will be to control, Kong says.

Early puberty is known to affect height, and in extreme cases may cause brain tumors.

To diagnose early puberty, your doctor may ask questions and run tests, including a physical exam, blood tests to check hormone and thyroid levels, and X-rays of the hand and wrist to check bone age. Family history may help your doctor determine whether the early puberty is genetic.



CFP Photo

Possible causes

Though experts said increased awareness and reporting of the condition have contributed to a rise in the number of cases being diagnosed, there may be other causes.

Cai Depei, a pediatrician at Children's Hospital of Fudan University, says obesity is the most likely culprit.

Children today are fatter than ever, and that excess weight may be causing the spike in hormones that trigger puberty.

Eating high-protein foods for extended periods may also cause early puberty, as can foods high in estrogen such as some milks, silkworm chrysalis and tonics that restore or increase body tone.

Environmental pollution may also be a factor in early development. Cai says girls in early puberty may have more environmental endocrine disrupters in their serum than normal girls, possibly due to exposure to chemicals found in consumer goods and certain foods.

"Cosmetics, vegetables treated to mature quickly and out-of-season fruits may be contributing factors, as can sleeping with the lights on," Kong says.

Lack of exercise and stress, such as over a broken marriage, can also start puberty early.

Medical reports from the US and Europe found that almost 5 percent of all boys will inherit precocious puberty from their father or maternal grandfather, though their mother may be unaffected.

Less than 1 percent of girls inherit precocious puberty.

Tips and warnings

1. Don't leave everything to the experts. As a parent, you have an important role to play. Reassure your child that he or she is normal, and that he doesn't have a disease.

2. Eat organic meat and dairy. Common meat and dairy products are full of hormones that may mimic estrogen.

3. Ensure that your child eats a balanced diet, engages in regular exercise and maintains a healthy weight. Being just 10 percent overweight increases the chance of early breast development by 10 percent.

4. Make reasonable efforts to avoid unnecessary exposure to chemicals in food and the environment.

5. Bathe often. Hormonal surges can cause the oil and sweat glands in the body to become active, which can lead to body odor and clogged pores. If not controlled, your teen can feel smelly and develop acne. Talk to him or her about bathing regularly and using deodorant. Staying fresh and clean can help to avoid ridicule from one's peers.

6. Allow time to relax. Puberty causes mental changes, especially during the menstrual cycle when hormones surge. These mental changes can include anxiety, depression and fatigue. Talk to your child about the importance of taking time to relax and de-stress.

A bit of snowy Italy in Harbin

By Zhang Dongya

If you're missing the snow this winter, travel north to Harbin, where the city is preparing to receive visitors from around the world for its ice and snow festivals.

While the ice festival is internationally renowned, visitors should also check out the Harbin Snow Sculpture Art Expo, which opened at the city's tourist hotspot, Sun Island, on December 28.

Co-organized with the Italian cities Innichen and Virgilio, it features Italy-themed snow sculptures that commemorate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations with China.



A sculpture depicting The Birth of Venus is special for its colored ice mixed with snow. Photos by Mockingbird

Snow art carnival

Harbin is famous for its downtown ice sculptures, especially those accompanied by laser shows at night. But snow sculptures are also worth checking out, and they're unique to Sun Island.

A sculpture that is more than 100 meters long stands near the entrance of Sun Island. It took 200 craftsmen working two straight weeks to make.

There are hundreds of similar – if not as big – sculptures inside the expo. They are divided into seven themed districts, many of them based on Italian culture.

The Ancient Roma section has snow sculptures depicting ancient Roman civilization. The sculptures retell stories from Roman mythology.

For a local flavor, the Guangdong Ancient Lanes section reproduces typical lanes and alleys found in Guangdong, which today comprises Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces. There is also a cluster of snow sculptures that show the results of north Harbin's economic boom.

In one area, prizewinners of various snow sculpture competitions have been gathered. The winner of a Heilongjiang Province competition is called "Apocalypse of Life." There are also works from elementary and middle school students.

In its past five years, the expo has coordinated with cities abroad, such as Montreal and Asahikawa, Japan. Following that tradition, international craftsmen created more than 300 pieces at this year's festival.

Sculpture-making

Many sculptures are still under production. Craftsmen with chisels work continuously while others push around carts of snow.

"Visitors can see craftsmen working on snow sculptures even near the end of the expo because the production process also attracts people's attention, and itself is art," said Gao Zhan, a local tour guide.

Among the pieces under construction is one of Italians eating pasta. One sculptor said his team has been working on this for five straight days, and they plan to complete it in a week.

Artificial snow – which is whiter and sticks together better than real snow – is used. People recommend not using artificial snow for snowballs because they can really hurt.

In a wooded area nearby, people can play in real snow and try their hand at snow sculptures of their own, though most visitors only have the patience to build a snowman.

One of the more popular displays is a depiction of Sandro Botticelli's painting *The Birth of Venus*. It's a sculpture that mixes ice with snow.

A local tour guide said all the ice comes from Songhua River, Heilongjiang's most important.

Large snow sculptures will be dumped in the river after the expo; small ones will melt and be poured into the man-made Sun Lake.

Continued on page 21...



Co-organized with the Italian cities Innichen and Virgilio, this year's Harbin Snow Sculpture Art Expo features Italy-themed snow sculptures. CFP Photo



Many sculptures remain under production, a process that visitors are curious about.



Huge snow sculptures take dozens of craftsmen working at least several days to complete.



Artificial snow is sometimes used in sculptures because it is whiter and gels better.

CFP Photo

...continued from page 20

Sun Island Scenic Spot

Open: 8:30 am – 7 pm (until the end of February)
Tel: 0451- 8819 2966
Admission: 150 yuan (75 yuan with a local ID card); 50 yuan for guide for two hours
Getting there: It takes an hour and 40 minutes to fly from Beijing to Harbin. By train it takes eight hours and costs 387 yuan for a ticket.
Take Tour Bus 29 from Youyi Lu to

Taiyangdao stop, or take Bus 80, 85, 88, 211, 213, 219, 46, 551 or 552 to Taiyangdao Daokou.
Accommodations:
A snow town on Sun Island caters to visitors. There are eight snow dwellings made out of artificial snow. With dry corn and chili hanging outside, they are decorated like farmers' cottages. Inside, visitors will find articles typical of farmhouses, including a heated kang,

a kind of brick bed, and cooking bench. These places serve hotpot and authentic local food.
Note:
1. The temperature in Harbin this week is between minus-18 C and minus-28 C. Wear many layers of thick clothes!
2. Roads in Harbin this season are hazardous. Most locals carpool when taking taxis.

Other destinations at Sun Island



The Museum of Russian Art is situated in an old European building.

The Museum of Russian Art
Built in 1994, the museum displays more than 4,000 pieces of Russian art, including paintings, ivory carvings and handicrafts. The hall of oil paintings features nearly 100 modern works, including work from the chairman of the Russian Academy of Arts.
Where: 3 Taiyangdao Jie, Sun Island Scenic Spot, Harbin, Heilongjiang Province
Open: 9 am – 4 pm
Tel: 0451-8819 0686
Admission: Free

Yu Zhixue Art Gallery
Yu Zhixue, the founder of snow landscape painting, is a native of Harbin. The gallery, founded in 2003, comprises two European buildings, four exhibition halls and an academic lecture hall. It specializes in collecting, researching and exhibiting snow landscape paintings.
Where: 20 Pingyuan Jie, Sun Island Scenic Spot, Harbin, Heilongjiang Province
Open: 9 am – 4 pm
Tel: 0451-8895 8221
Admission: Free

Other events:

A one-week Italian food festival will be held during the expo. Restaurants, cafes and bars will be decorated with Italian elements and Italian chefs will be invited.

A pantomime will be performed on the snow stage in Sun Island every weekend. During the 30-minute performance, children can interact with the mimes.

There is a parade every day featuring a float, a band, Vatican city guards and more than 40 cartoon characters.
Snow slides and a site for riding snowmobiles are also available.



Eight snow dwellings made out of artificial snow serve hotpot and authentic local food.



Visitors can see a parade every day featuring Vatican City guards and cartoon characters.



Photos by Mockingbird

Hotel



Marco Polo Winter Saver

This winter, book the Marco Polo Winter Saver and stay at any Marco Polo hotel to enjoy best available rates and more.

Enjoy a complimentary Buffet Breakfast (maximum two persons); complimentary Internet access; early check-in at noon (subject to availability) and guaranteed late check-out before 4 pm; a complimentary upgrade to the next room category (subject to availability); and your choice of pillows.

Where: Marco Polo Parkside, Beijing, 78 Anli Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 28
Tel: 5963 6688

Shangri-La improves local schools

To raise funds for local beneficiaries, the Dandelion and Hua Ao Shijingshan schools for children of low-income migrants, Shangri-La hotels in Beijing sold 3,126 boxes of moon cakes to raise 156,300 yuan.

The proceeds of the sales will be used to improve basic facilities at the schools. The engineering teams of the participants — China World Hotel, Beijing; Shangri-La Hotel, Beijing; Shangri-La's Kerry Centre Hotel, Beijing; Traders Hotel, Beijing and Traders Upper East Hotel, Beijing — will visit each school to suggest how the funds can best be used.

The Shangri-La group has supported and sponsored schools and children since 2008. This initiative to raise funds is part of its continuing mission of corporate social responsibility, which began in 2009 with the Shangri-La's Caring People Project.

Starwoodmeetings.com triple points offer

Earn triple Starpoints and a booking bonus of 1,000 Starpoints on your next meeting at The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel, Beijing.

Valid for meetings held before mid-February.

Get Starpoints immediately when you book. Receive a booking bonus of 1,000 Starpoints for every 25 nights booked, given at the time of booking.

Earn triple Starpoints with no limits to the number of points you can earn. The larger the group, the more points you can receive!

Lower your next event's bill with Starpoints: use your Starpoints for meeting credits at your next meeting. The first 15,000 Starpoints are worth \$200 credit, and each additional 7,500 Starpoints are worth \$150.

Where: The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 28
Tel: 6590 5566



Exclusive room at the Ritz-Carlton

Tap into the emerging business hub of China Central Place and recharge in the intimate surroundings of The Ritz-Carlton, Beijing. Discover a world of exquisite dining, unparalleled luxury and legendary service. The Ritz-Carlton, Beijing is where successful business occasions and leisurely indulgence combine.

Where: The Ritz-Carlton, 83A Jianguo Lu, China Central Place, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 28 (Monday to Thursday)

Cost: 20 percent off best rates (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: 5908 8888

Dining



Valentine's Day

Love is in the air. Come celebrate Valentine's Day with your loved one at a romantic candlelight dinner at Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun. Enjoy a perfect romantic set dinner for two with sumptuous cuisine and a heartwarming chocolate cake for dessert.

Where: Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun, 106 Zhichun Lu, Haidian District
Tel: 5993 8888 ext. 2300

Happy & Prosperous Chinese New Year

Book an exciting Chinese New Year package for an elegant private party dinner at Rouge Restaurant served with Crowne Plaza's set-menus. The Crowne guarantees you will have a great time unwinding with family and friends.

Where: Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun, 106 Zhichun Lu, Haidian District

Tel: 5993 8888 ext. 2316/2317/2318

Hotspring



HongFu • Hot Spring Leisure City

Located 20 kilometers north of Beijing, HongFu • Hot Spring Leisure City has a favorable geographical position and convenient traffic location.

Its north borders the source of the Wenyu River, and 3 kilometers to the south are Huilongguan and Tiantongyuan Residential Estates. The water system extends in all directions for 7 kilometers. As the former site of Prince Pingxi's Palace during Yongzheng's reign (1723-1735), HongFu • Hot Spring Leisure City contains profound historical and cultural contents, as well as rich geological resources.

Its five hot spring wells come from depths of more than 3,000 meters, where the temperature is 79 C. The wells put out more than 10,000 cubic meters of mineral water each day.

Where: Zhenggezhuang Village, Beiqijia Town, Changping District

Tel: 8178 8888 / 1111

Jiuhua Resort and Convention Center

Surrounded by ancient architecture, emerald bamboo and clear springs, there is a sense of tranquility and relaxation. Enjoy hot springs and massages in this timeless environment.

The architecture of the hot springs palace follows ancient styles. There are exquisite courtyards, winding roads, birds singing in the bamboo and waterfalls. These scenes create a sense of peace and tranquility.

Sauna, massage and traditional Chinese medicine are available for guests.

Where: Xiaotangshan Town, Changping District

When: 8 am – 2 am next day

Tel: 6178 2288 ext. 2430/2432/2640/2642

Beijing Chunhuiyuan Resort

Beijing Chunhuiyuan Resort is located beside the Jingcheng Expressway. It is the only hot spring holiday resort in Central Villa.

Inside, enjoy shimmering waves and thousands of green acres. Beijing Chunhuiyuan Resort has high-level holiday facilities consisting of a Hot Spring Club, five-star Hot Spring Boutique Hotel, International Commercial Convention Center and Lounge Club. Its hot springs originate from a royal spring groundwater system in Xiaotangshan.

Chunhuiyuan Resort's alkalescency bicarbonate mineral hot springs come from 2,300 meters below the ground where the temperature is a steady 60 C. Its custom-made hot-spring system is both luxurious and tasteful.

Come and relax in style!

Where: Yuzhuang Village, Gaoliying Town, Shunyi District

Tel: 6945 4433

(By Jackie Zhang)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

'Standing Flower' and 'Take Iron'

By Zhao Hongyi

My nephew works in the import-export business, where he contacts people from around the world and travels a lot. Last week, he came to Beijing for business and stayed at my house for a week.

His English is very good, but, like most young people in China, he likes to speak some Chinglish to express his individual flair.

One evening, I asked him about his job and business over dinner.

"Everything is on the right track," he said, "and what I need is to be the 'standing flower' in our company so I can grasp the opportunities."

Standing flower? I had never heard of the phrase and decided to look up the phrase.

Alas, the dictionary turned up no results. I turned to online sources.

To my surprise, the phrase has caught on with the city's expat community.

"Standing flower" is a direct translation of a phrase from Sichuan Province, meaning an active person among a group of people.

In the minds of Sichuan natives, flowers blossom, not stand. So a "standing flower" is one that thinks it's superior than the others.

When applied to people, it implies a type of overachiever who strives to stand out.

Another example is "no wind, no waves." In Chinese, it means everything will be in peace and harmony if no one spreads rumors or talks behind another person's back. My nephew recalls the time he first told a foreign friend about this.

"He thought I was talking about sailing!" he said.

Other Chinglish phrases with typical Chinese specialties my nephew introduced include "No Noising!" (Quiet, please!) and "Question Authority" (information desk at the airport).

It is said you need to use the authoritative phrases in China because we Chinese are used to these domineering tones and believe in authoritarian!

Lastly, he told me about an interesting

sign he saw in front of a Nanjing cafe: "Take Iron Coffee!"

It was supposed to read "Café Latté! But "latté" translated into Chinese as "na tie" – take iron!



Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week

1. The exhibition is Lin's first time looking to ancient poetry for inspiration.

Professor Zhu Shida (ZS): There is nothing wrong with this sentence grammatically. The problem lies in rhetoric and the idiomatic way of saying things. There is some inconsistency between the subject and the object. How can "the exhibition" be related to the "first time" in a subject-object structure? We should do a little polishing and make it sound more idiomatic: The exhibition is Lin's first effort in looking to ancient poetry for inspiration. Or we may say: The exhibition is Lin's first show in which he looks to ancient poetry for inspiration. Is it better? The subject "exhibition" can well be matched with "effort" or "show" in logic. So, you see, to be a good English writer, you have to be well groomed not only in grammar, but also in logic and rhetoric. This calls for lifelong efforts.

Terry Boyd-Zhang (TBZ): Getting the logic organized is one of the hardest parts of writing. I often remind my students of two things. (1) Did you answer the question? Or did you write something else? And (2) Does your introduction, whether it is a paragraph or an essay, match your conclusion? For example, if you "agreed" in the introduction, you can't "disagree" when you reach the end. This logic is different than the Professor's point about logic within the subject-object structure, but it is just as important!

2. I'm exploring to find truth.

ZS: This is a sentence I honestly found in someone's writing. It has the same problem with the previous case: rhetorically redundant. As we know, "to explore" means to go over carefully; to look into closely; to examine. The children explored the house from attic to basement. Its synonyms are investigate, scrutinize, search. You are exploring for something. When you are exploring for something, you have not yet found them. For instance, when we say China is exploring for oil, it means China has not yet found oil. So, when "to explore" is followed by "to find," it is contradictory. When you say, I'm exploring to find truth, it means that you have not yet found truth. You are still exploring it. For example, the scientist had been exploring for the cause of this natural phenomenon for decades and finally found it this year. This is logically sound. So, the right way to say it may be like this: I'm trying to find truth.

TBZ: Another way to say this might be I'm exploring (something – such as religion, political systems, psychologies, whatever) to find the truth. Also, although it is fine without the article, you may want to say "the truth." Adding "the" gives the assumption that there is only one truth; alternatively, "a" truth would signify that there is more than one truth.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Police execute an order

By Terry Boyd-Zhang

The first two characters on this sign say *jingcha*, which means "police." There's a fine balance between enough police presence for us to feel safe and not so much as to make us feel oppressed. Where I come from in Canada, there are two police cars in town – no joke – and they are usually parked outside the Tim Hortons coffee and doughnut store. It's a pretty happenin' place, my hometown.

I would like to think that most of us are law-abiding citizens who are pleased when police execute an order. For example, when the neighbors we dislike park their gas-guzzling, smog-inducing SUV on the sidewalk, we are happy when they get a ticket. In Beijing, we can



also assume that the orders the police receive are in the best interest of public safety and security.

"Execute" makes me remember a fantastic wonton soup restaurant – they also made delicious *subing*, a Chinese pastry – in the northeast part of town. It was

around his neck advertising his crime. Very exciting.

Anyway. The last two characters are *zhiquan*, which simply means "on duty." Quite likely Chinglish for: On duty executing orders ... at the doughnut shop.



Scene 1

(Paul wakes up to find himself buried in a coffin. His mobile phone is vibrating.)

Female operator (O):

Yes. 911.

Paul Conroy (P): Hello!

I'm buried! You have to help me! I can't breathe!

O: Sir?

P: I'm buried in a coffin.

Please, help. Send someone to find me.

O: Sir, slow down. What is your name?

P: Paul. Paul Conroy.

O: Okay, Mr. Conroy. Can you tell me your location?

P: I don't know. I'm in a coffin. I don't know where. Please, help! I'm scared.

O: You are in a coffin?

P: Yes. It's like one of those old, wooden ones.

O: Are you at a funeral home?

P: No. No. No. I don't know.

O: How are you calling me right now?

P: What?

O: If you are buried in a coffin, where are you calling me from?

P: From a cell phone. There was an old cell phone in the coffin.

O: You're calling me from your cell phone?

P: Yes. No, no. It's not my cell phone, but, yes, I'm calling from a cell phone.

O: There was a cell phone in the coffin when you climbed in?

P: Yes. What? I didn't climb in, though.

O: How did you **end up in** (1) the coffin, sir?

P: I was put here.

O: In the coffin?

P: Yes. Please, help!

O: Are you a soldier, sir?

P: No, please, you have to listen to me. I'm a truck driver. I'm an American. I'm a civilian contractor working in Iraq. We were attacked in Baqubah. And they... They shot all of them.

O: They shot who, sir?

P: All of the other drivers.

O: And you are saying this happened in Iraq? The country?

P: Yeah. Please, listen to me, okay? They gave me a safety number and it was in my wallet, and I don't know where it is now.

O: Mr. Conroy this is 911 emergency in Youngstown, Ohio.

P: Ohio?

O: Yes, sir. I'm not sure exactly how you called here if you're in another country but if you'd like, I can **patch you through** (2) to the sheriff's department.

P: You don't understand. Forget it.

Movie of the week

What *Buried* lacks in action, it makes up for many times over with its tension. The entire two-hour film shows only a single character who is buried alive in a coffin. Outstanding directing by Rodrigo Cortes and an award-worthy performance by Ryan Reynolds make the film incredibly watchable even if there is never a scene change.

Synopsis

Paul Conroy, an American truck driver working in Iraq, is not ready to die. But die he will.

After being jumped by terrorists and knocked out, Paul awakens six feet underground sealed inside a coffin with naught but a cell phone and a lighter. His phone calls to the outside world are all he has to help him piece together clues about his location.

BURIED

A RODRIGO CORTÉS FILM

Scene 2

(Paul calls the FBI)

P: Is this the FBI?

FBI agent (A): Yes, it is, sir.

P: OK. I'm calling from Iraq. I'm buried in the desert somewhere. I need you to help me.

A: Whoa. Whoa. Sir, slow down. When were you in Iraq?

P: Now. I'm there now. I'm a truck driver. I work for CRT. I've been here for nine months.

A: May I have your name, please, sir?

P: It's Paul Conroy.

A: OK Paul, explain to me what's going on.

P: All right. Me and a convoy of other drivers were delivering some kitchen supplies to a community center. And then some kids, they started throwing rocks at the trucks. And then, an IED

went off up ahead and it blew up one of the other trucks. And then these guys, they came out from behind the houses and they started shooting everyone right there on the street.

A: Were you shot at?

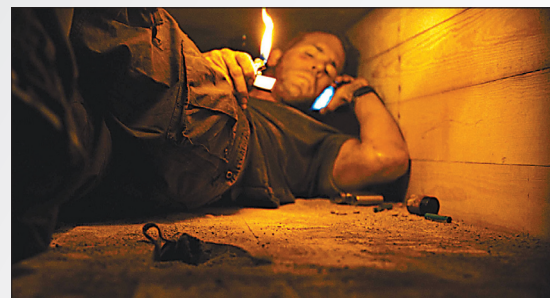
P: I don't know. I was way in the back of the convoy. I guess I got hit in the head by one of the rocks and I **blacked out** (3), and that's the last thing that I remember. And then I woke up here, tied up, in a coffin.

A: Who put you there?

P: I guess whoever ambushed us.

A: A bunch of kids?

P: No. No, no, no, no, no. Some kids, the kids, they threw the rocks at us. These guys, some Iraqis, some insurgents. I don't f---king know. They just ... They **popped out** (4) and they



started shooting everybody ... right there on the street.

A: I thought you said they didn't shoot at you.

P: They didn't! I don't know. They shot them! (Paul shouts.)

A: Sir, you're gonna have to stop shouting.

P: I'm shouting because you're not listening to me! I need you to help me!

A: OK. OK. OK. I got it.

P: Can you trace the call? GPS or something?

A: Why is it that they didn't shoot you?

P: I don't know. I have no idea. They didn't. That's all I know.

A: What is your social security number, Paul?

P: Why? (Paul scoffs) Why? Who cares? I'm buried in the middle of the f---king desert, who cares what my social security number is? I'm an American citizen. Just send someone to find me. Please!

Scene 3

(Special agent Dan calls Paul.)

Agent Dan (D): Paul, is that you?

P: They're dead.

D: How do you know that?

P: I just do. Three F-16s leveled parts of the city a few minutes ago.

D: Yeah, I know.

P: Yeah, that was fun for me. Did they know I was here?

D: Yeah.

P: Yeah. Did they care? These people that took me, if they're dead, they can't tell you

where I am.

D: We can still try to **track down** (5) your signal.

P: You tried that already.

D: We can try again.

P: It's over, isn't it?

D: No ... (pauses) Yeah.

P: What should I do?

D: I don't know.

P: It's weird.

D: What is?

P: Knowing.

D: I wish this could have gone differently, Paul.

P: Yeah. Me, too.

Vocabulary

- end up in:** come to be
- patch someone through:** to connect, as on a telephone
- black out:** to lose consciousness
- pop out:** to jump out in a surprising fashion
- track down:** to locate

(By Huang Daohen)